THE WIRE

adventures in modern music

ISSUE 150 · AUGUST 96 · £2·50 / US $5·50

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A sonic youth abroad
Lee Ranaldo in Jajouka

Basic Channel
Techno troglodytes

Barry Adamson's
jukebox

Omni Trio

.O.rang

James Dillon

The Black Dog

150
essential objects of musical desire

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Mute Records

Barry Adamson
Oedipus Schmoedipus
CD/LP. (CD/Stumm134)

Barry Adamson's new album blends traditional jazz, sly hip hop beats, soul stirring gospel, big band swagger, classical strings and Spaghetti thrillers themes. Guest vocalists on "Oedipus Schmoedipus" include former Associate Billy McKenzie, Nick Cave and Jarvis Cocker.

Renegade Soundwave
1987–1995
CD only. (CDStumm152)

RSW manifest themselves under dual psyches – one operating in instrumental dub; the other with more structured dance material. This 29 track double CD compilation (for the price of a single CD) fully illustrates the band's output from their 9 year association with Mute. Like all true innovators Renegade Soundwave have never reaped the fruits of their labours – this is the perfect introduction to RSW.

Voodoo Child
The End Of Everything
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As Voodoo Child, dance/rock guru Moby is able to enjoy the liberty that his better known moniker doesn't allow. "The End Of Everything" exhibits simple electronic instrumentals that build into richly melodic soundscapes.

Einstürzende Neubauten
Ende Neu
LP/CD/CD+ (Bstem504/CD/CDX)

Long anticipated new album from Europe's leading sound innovationalists. Ever eager for perpetual change, "Ende Neu" sees Neubauten encompass their long held techniques of creating music from everything from their own metal constructions to motors along with traditional instruments and orchestral string sections. Arguably, with tracks like the single "Stella Maris", their most accessible album to date, but easily as challenging as any previous. Released 19th August. (Limited Edition CD Plus version also available).

Laibach
Occupied Europe NATO Tour 1994-95
Video & CD box set. (MSEZCDX)

An individually numbered, limited edition box set commemorating Laibach's last tour and particularly their two triumphant concerts in battle-scarred Sarajevo that took place on the last day of the Bosnian/Serbian conflict and the first day of peace. CD – features full concert. Video – includes concert footage alongside documentary and promo material. Released 5th August.

Panasonic
Osasto EP
MLP/MCD (Bffp129/CD)

This mini album is the follow-up to the Finnish techno minimalists extraordinary "Vakio" album. Where previously the beats and tones were implicit they are now bigger and bolder. Full length new album to follow in late '96.

Forthcoming distractions:– Simon Fisher Turner *CD* September • Glenn Branca *CD* September • Phill Niblock *CD* October
Laibach *CD/LP* October • Diamanda Galas *CD* October • Jon Spencer Blues Explosion *CD/LP* October

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inside

your monthly exploration of new music

4 Bim Sherman's *Miracle*
Rob Young visits the On-U Sound label to hear about the music on this month's free cover CD

12 Globar Ear: Barcelona
Tracking the currents of digitised sound at Spain's expansive Sonar festival

16 Bites
The Black Dog A Techno-hermit comes up for air **James Plotkin** Drone-guitarist with soul **Soma** Ambient Antipodeans

18 Basic Channel
Electronic music's most mysterious label takes Biba Kopf on a journey through the circuits connecting Berlin and Detroit Techno

21 .O.rang
Holed up in their rural studio, the ex-Talk Talk duo take quantum leaps in sound and come up with some novel ideas concerning electricity pylons By Matt ffytche

22 Fred Anderson
From behind the bar of Chicago's Velvet Lounge, the fugitive saxophonist blows new life into the roots of astro jazz By John Corbett

24 Omni Trio
From post-punk avant funk through industrial soundscapes to New York minimalism and breakbeat science, Rob Haigh's musical path has been a convoluted one By Peter Shapiro

26 Lee Ranaldo's Jajouka journal
Following in the footsteps of Brian Jones Ornette Coleman and William Burroughs, the Sonic Youth guitarist enters the volatile realms of North African trance music

32 Behind *The Wire*: 150 objects of desire
To celebrate our 150th issue, we offer up an alternative canon of sonic essentials and aural obscurities, an A-Z of all the weird and wonderful music that lies behind *The Wire*

38 James Dillon
A Glaswegian counterculture drop-out with a taste for Jimi Hendrix and class-A drugs Not your average classical music composer By Ben Watson

40 Invisible Jukebox: Barry Adamson
Mike Barnes gabs about A Certain Ratio Henry Mancini, The Beach Boys, Massive Attack, Herbie Hancock, Squarepusher and more with the Mute composer

reviews

45 Soundcheck August's selected albums, including new releases from Beck, Sheila Chandra, Alec Empire, The Fall, Faust, Gastr Del Sol, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, King Crimson, Fela Kuti, Pete Namlook, The Orb, Vernon Reid, Unknown Public, Andrew Weatherall and more **68 Print Run** New music books The Beach Boys, John Cage, Miles Davis **70 Multimedia** Sabotage's Techno-pranks

6 Editorial 8 Letters 14 Soundings August's selected live events, happenings, club spaces, music on radio **20 Subscribe 44 Charts 71 Back Issues 74 David Toop** Some soul singers' secrets

Bim Sherman

Adrian Sherwood

Rob Young visits the On-U Sound HQ to hear about the making of **Bim Sherman's *Miracle*** album, which provides the music on this month's free cover CD*

When I arrive at the On-U Sound label's North London HQ to talk about the extracts from Bim Sherman's new *Miracle* album on this month's free cover CD, the place is buzzing. You can tell how much the project means to those involved: Bim, producer Adrian Sherwood, tabla player Talvin Singh, bassist Skip McDonald, *et al*. A rootsy, acoustic counterpart to Sherwood and McDonald's Little Axe project of 1995, *Miracle* grew out of Sherwood's admiration for Sherman's high, floating voice, and seems to have developed over a lengthy period, free of agendas or imperatives. The record's most arresting quality is the way the acoustic format (a gossamer counterweight to the psychedelic dubs normally associated with these musicians) casts new light on the chemistry that exists between these superb players. "You can go with everything what people doing, sometime you have to go more universally," Bim says. "Two type of music you have, which is: good and bad."

Recording *Miracle* turned out to be quite an adventure. Beginning with Bim's voice, Sherwood added Talvin's fluttering tablas, a connection which led to Bim and Talvin flying out to Bombay to record Bollywood-style string parts. "It's a different course and music combining together American music, Indian music, and my vocal [illegible]. It's quite a sweet mixtures of ingredients there."

"[illegible] magic record to me," comments Sherwood, who unexpectedly cites Ray Charles's *Future Sound Of Country & Western* album as a major influence on the project. "None of us knew how it would turn out. But it all fitted together, and it's like a breath of fresh air. Reggae singers now, they're competing on the rhythm [illegible] you have to make the rhythm tough to get the sale. On this, there's no rhythm, but fundamentally it's still got the ingredients of reggae: the repetition of basslines, a hint of the chop, even. And a voice that's still got a Jamaican accent."

Final words from that voice: "I always sing with a spiritual voice. It's a gift I get through the spirit. We had a good relationship on this record. It was the vibes, the spirit, and when you start something with A-class vibes, then you find it music end up with A-class vibes. It was my destiny." Miracle *is released on Mantra/On-U Sound (through RTM/DISC)*

PHOTOS DEAN BELCHER

creation rebels unplugged

We regret that this month's free CD is limited to UK readers only and is not available overseas

THE WIRE

Issue 150 August 1996
£2 50 $5 50 ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231)

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(USA newsstand quenes call Toll Free 1800 221 3148)

Subscriptions

UK £30
Europa £35
USA $60/£35
Rest Of World
£50 Air £35 Surface
Hotline 0171 734 3555

Printed by St Ives PLC
The Wire is a member of the Namara Group (Chairman Naim Attallah) It is published 12 times per year by The Wire Magazine Ltd
2nd Class Postage is paid at Hackensack NJ 07601
Postmaster Please send address changes to The Wire (Royal Mail International) c/o Yellowstone International 237S Pratt Boulevard, Elk Grove Village FL 60007-5937 USA

Special thanks this issue to Matt ffytche Joy Lewis Pete Flanagan and Mick Houghton
Cover photograph **Tim Kent**

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editor's idea

In music — especially in music — everything that can be listed, is Top 100 Guitarists, Top 100 Songwriters, The Greatest Composers Of All Time, Top 50 Drummers With A Methadone Habit, 100 Greatest Kazoo Obbligatos Of All Time, 50 Best Uses Of Parentheses In A Song Title, 25 Best Records Containing Gratuitous Use Of A Surgical Instrument, 10 Best LPs Containing Contact Mic Recordings Of A Malaysian Rice Field (it's been done, believe me) Even *The Wire* has been known to get in on the act back in June 1992, to celebrate the 100th issue, the magazine published a modest little list of The 100 Most Important Records Ever Made, the only chart in history to contain The Dinwiddie Colored Quartet, Oziga Vertov, Chuck Berry, Morton Subotnick *Songs Of The Humpback Whale*, Muggsy Spanier, Minor Threat and Madonna When we realised (about two weeks ago) that this would be the magazine's 150th issue, another celebratory chart along the lines of 150 Greatest Something Or Others Of All Time was out of the question well, how could we possibly top that earlier 100? But we had to do something, couldn't let such an epochal event pass without comment But what?

Turn to page 32 and you'll find a roll-call, not really a chart, describing 150 instances of musical endeavour, without which your life, naturally, will be but a hollow shell Of course, this being *The Wire*, our particular collection of 'aural essentials' is someway different from everyone else's

Lists are fun, but they come with a price tag attached Ignoring the obfuscating economics of all those 'official' Top 40s, and aside from the obvious fact that lists and charts reduce music and musicians to anonymous bits of data, to be endlessly processed and recycled far from the moment of inception, the listing-mania that has been brought to bear on music by fans and critics alike for decades hasn't been an entirely innocent pursuit.

In compiling their tables and averages of outstanding artistic achievement, music critics, in particular, have become latter-day FR Leavises, manning the barricades of their particular traditions and histories, shoring up the territory against outside incursion by alien forces, rogue elements, isolated mavericks and unforeseen initiatives Put it down to *fin de siecle* fever, millennium madness, whatever, but in recent months it feels like the orthodoxies have been closing in with claustrophobic regularity, the curators in the great halls of rock, jazz and classical music laying down the canon fodder for posterity, invoking the tradition so it lies like a dead-weight across present and future possibilities

Our list of 150 Sonic Essentials And Aural Obscurities is an attempt to offer an alternative to such insidious library-building, to dent the complacency of all this received 'wisdom' Few of the musicians listed can be accommodated in any single canon with any degree of comfort they are the rough edges periodically filed down by the acknowledged, streamlined histories of 20th century music Taken as a whole, what they describe, perhaps, is a layering of shared experience, a network, distributed through time and space, of wayward exploration, and a desire to free music from the crippling embrace of the customs and lores that spawn it

One inspiration for compiling such an anti-honour-roll came from an outwardly unlikely source the Cameroon musician Manu Dibango Reviewing Dibango's 1994 autobiography, *Three Kilos Of Coffee*, in *The Wire* 130, Chris Stapleton wrote "For James Joyce, Ireland was the old sow that eats her farrow — for Manu Dibango, Africa treats her creative children similarly Dibango reserves his greatest distaste for African tradition, usually revered in the West as a touchstone of authenticity but attacked here for stifling creativity Words such as 'traditional' and 'local' are used pejoratively Back in Cameroon, Manu laments 'I had no music to listen to We could only hear traditional music'"

Such an attitude in a musician with Dibango's circumstances is striking, not to mention strikingly familiar We catch ourselves on its rough edges, and look to the future regardless Here's to the next 150

TONY HERRINGTON

The September issue of *The Wire*
More of your favourite genre-capsizing pages of features, interviews, CD reviews, music books, multimedia, live news, free offers and more
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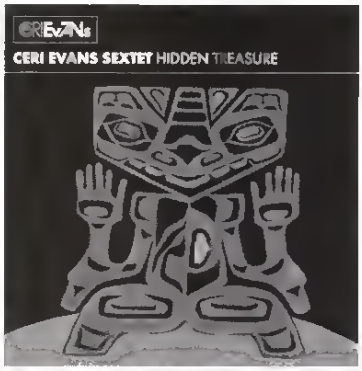

Ceri Evans

Ex Brand New Heavies Ceri Evon's 'Hidden Treasure' is o vibrant celebration of modern jozz performed by some of the most exciting young talent oround.

"A ruggedly authoritative pianist in a Mank-meets-McCay mauld" Mojo

"A re-invention in the making" Straight No Chaser

Featuring Ceri Evans (piano and composer) Gerard Presencer (trumpet) Tim Garland (tenor/soprana saxaphone) John Miles (tenor saxophone) Arnie Somogyi (acoustic bass) Tristan Malliot (drums)

Ruth Naomi Floyd

"A new voice in jazz"

Gospel and jazz singer Ruth Noomi Floyd's debut album, 'Porodigms for Desolote Times' mixes saul-stirring gospel with the rhythm of jozz.

Floyd addresses themes of spirituality and hope in her writing, and fuses free-form jazz with a message of positive affirmation and hope for change that moves the gospel tradition forward.

Featuring Ruth Naomi Floyd (vocals) Ed Howard (acoustic bass) Kevin Bruce Harris (electric bass) Craig Handy (tenor and soprano saxophones) Uri Caine (piano ond organ) Brian Carrot (vibraphone) Tern Lyne Corrington (drums)

letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 45-46 Poland Street, London W1V 3DF,
or fax 0171 287 4767, or e-mail *the_wire@ukonline.co.uk*
Every letter published wins a FREE CD

Byrning issue

No doubt you will receive many incensed responses to John Byrne's pathetically presumptious letter (*The Wire* 149) However, as a regular inhabitant of sundry dancefloors who also buys Derek Bailey LPs, I would like to know who Byrne (hopefully not the same one who wrote *The Slab Boys* and *Tutti Frutti*) imagines himself to be speaking for This really is the familiar quasi-Darmstadt puritanism at its worst, an outdated, arrogant and ultimately anti-social aesthetic which sneers at pleasure and populism, the musical equivalent of closed-shop economics I'm sure Bailey himself has no time for this pseudo-realpolitik, his music has always been about openness, all-inclusiveness and directness of communication Listening as I am now to the CD reissue of *Ode* by Barry Guy and the London Jazz Composers Orchestra (which I was far too young to catch first time round), I hear no elitism or preciousness, but simply explosive emotions which penetrate me directly, the same feelings which in differing degrees, I get from Underworld, Omni Trio, Method Man, Oasis, Squarepusher, the *Relativity Suite*-sampling Stereolab and a million others

I would advise Byrne to stick with his Henze box sets and Rudiger Carl retrospectives, and leave the rest of us to get on with the future

Marcello Carlin *London*

Mr Byrne, you're way off beam In the last four or five weeks my most memorable musical experiences have included tapping my toes to the Peter Erskine and John Abercrombie Trios, thrilling out to the improvised magnificence of Marilyn Crispell/Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton, limbering up (on the same day) to the flamenco/Arabic roots-fusion of Radio Tanfa, nodding-out to The Byron Wallen Quartet, and jogging myself stupid to the exultant Techno-punk of Black Star Liner and the ethno-psychedelic gumbo of Transglobal Underground (excuse my genre proscriptions) In the last fortnight my shopping bag has carried home releases by Paul Schutze, King Tubby, Evan Parker/Paul Bley, Tortoise, DJ Spooky, Squarepusher, Photek, Scanner, Terry Riley and Anthony Braxton, as well as Electronica compilations from Trance-Europe Express, Sub Rosa and Ninja Tune (remember them?)

The point is I know I'm not the only one In my town I know of many others who are as enthused as I am by the enormous range of sonic possibilities that are emerging from the accelerated cross-fertilisations of our time (Sorry — that started to sound like a sentence from *The Wire*)

I may be, in David Toop's terms, a MAMMWL (middle-aged, mild-mannered white liberal), but I enjoy a musical menu that reaches all parts of me — head, heart, pelvis and feet I hate to say this, buster (being mild-mannered), but your letter sounds suspiciously like the voice of an Improv snob talking out his arse (ISTOHA), and probably a chronologically-challenged one at that

As of yet, and despite the odd bit of socio-political twaddle, I know of no other music journal except *The Wire* that is comprehensive (and bold?) enough to cover such a broad spectrum of styles, from the fringes of mainstream commercialism to the furthest iconoclastic reaches of what-d'ya-call-it, ie one which caters to my ever broadening musical palette

By the way, we're having fun Are you?

PS I probably will buy the new Derek Bailey album

Francis Vine *Bristol*

How clever of you to print John Byrne's scathing letter attacking the way *The Wire* has changed over the years Although John seems to wish for a return to the old days when improvised music and wild jazz was the province of the privileged few, the hip and the intellectual snobs, I for one find it quite tragic that someone who obviously loves music is so narrow-minded in his viewpoint

Surely phrases used by *The Wire* such as 'Access All Areas', 'Adventures In Modern Music and 'Monthly exploration of New Music' indicate clearly the contents

I have only subscribed to *The Wire* for the past couple of years after spending five years in the Middle East, and I have found your magazine invaluable in bringing me up to speed on recent musical invention This magazine and *Mixing It* on Radio 3 are where it's at, as far as I'm concerned, if you will pardon my hippy-speak

My friends, involved in Techno, Jungle and percussion-based improvisation are now becoming avid *Wire* readers

Currently I am waiting for a feature on ethnic dance, for want of a better term, eg Loop Guru, Transglobal Underground, Astralasia, etc, or a feature on The Hafler Trio, and perhaps another on zoviet*france and Muslimgauze But I am not going to even mention this because I have such faith in the quality of your magazine and its writers that I am sure you will get around to this *[We already have Check your subscription back issues for features on Loop Guru, Transglobal Undergound, zoviet*france and Muslimgauze Ed]*

Hugh Beattie *Clydebank*

There's always one

Further to John Byrne's pointed reservations about *The Wire*'s dancehall leanings, a pertinent issue may have been raised Given the prevailing climate of sneery anti-intellectualism and general low-level expectation in the UK music media, *The Wire* remains one of very few publications which invite the possibility of music serving some function other than as a tool for tribal identification or as a vehicle for the enthusiastic media whoring of social inadequates

Despite the increasing pressures being applied to magazines by retail chains, advertisers and the demographically-fixated clerks whose myopic counsel they invite, *The Wire* has not yet surrendered itself to an obliging journalistic lobotomy However, as Mr Byrne points out, some signs of an uneasy compromise are evident His example of Coldcut's unexpected cover status is one, and the recent profile of clubland icon Andrew Weatherall (*The Wire* 148) is another

The five page interview with the 'rogue and independent' Mr Weatherall elicited no acute creative insight or evidence of maverick intent, instead being pitched as a 'personality' piece, as though questionable celebrity and (gasp) chemical excess might somehow excuse his apparent lack of any musical perception, original or otherwise Given club music's reliance on 4/4 formulas, generic categorisations and its preoccupation with the merely ballistic, this may not be entirely surprising What is more significant is how much of the available space was used to ponder the appalling burden of being Andrew Weatherall and how little was used to ponder music

The acreage of entirely interchangeable 'club culture' magazines are presumably aimed at chemically over-excited children with a reading age as limited as their attention span Consequently, their content is celebrity-driven, knuckle-scrapingly simplistic, and has lots of bright colours on every page But I suspect

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readers of *The Wire* may have come, with good reason, to expect a little more probing of ideas and testing of artistic substance, irrespective of the subject's media profile or musical configuration
David Thompson *Time Recording*

Take no prisoners

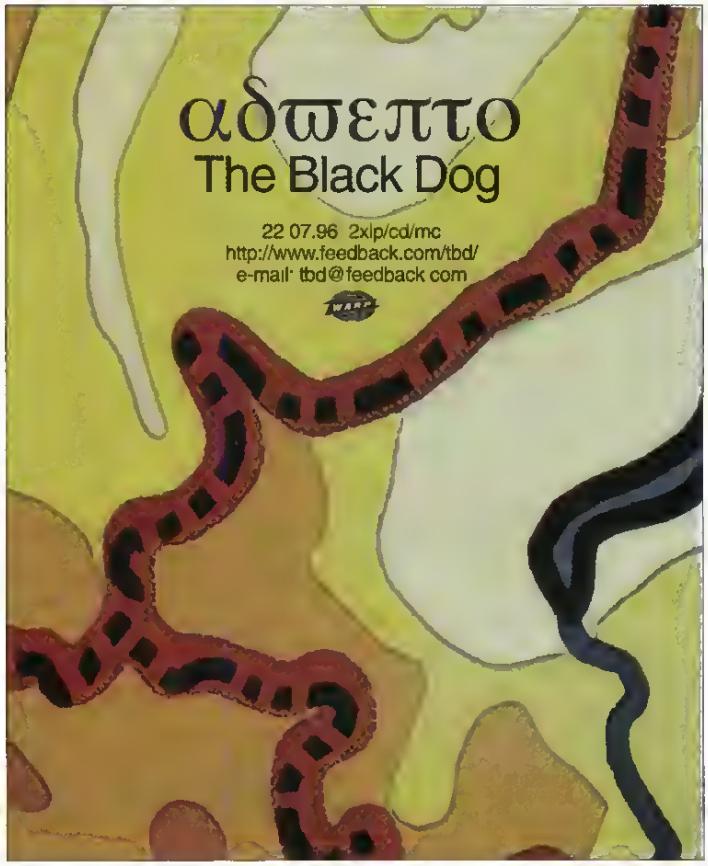
In his article on hardstep drum 'n' bass (*The Wire* 148), Simon Reynolds states that "Music which is divorced from its subcultural context suffers from the meaning-deficit that vitiates all art-for-art's sake activity" While we agree that any artform worthy of the name should attempt to reflect, antagonise or otherwise connect with the wider world, we cannot help but conclude that in the context of the drum 'n' bass ghettto, a negative trend overrides this aim artists pander to the already established tastes of a uniformed audience Ritual is cabaret.

It is our belief that any musician who accepts a label is inherently conservative, and, as in politics, only those who have no answers for the future need to revive the past or conserve the present It is far more important to disorientate your audience than it is to be the willing prisoners of a subculture or marketing category
Spectacle RIP *Manchester*

Corrections

Issue 149 The photograph accompanying our Bites profile of Marque Gilmore should have been credited to Benoit. On the Charts page, the '13 Types of Hop' chart was originally posted to the Hyperreal Ambient newsgroup by Alan Lockett

I have enjoyed and benefitted greatly from your magazine (it takes the guess-work out of shopping), so I wanted to give each of you involved in publishing and editing a token of my appreciation Enclosed are some reproductions of my most recent artwork — inspired by my listening experience of the Mille Plateaux CD *In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze* I hope you are able to enjoy them
Lisa Ariotti *Florida*



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global ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

Barcelona

Barcelona, as ever, is humming with life. Looking down on the city's ground-plan from above as our plane approaches its final run, I'm struck by how forcibly it echoes the structure of practically every William Gibson novel. The ancient Gothic centre, with its rhizomatic runnels of streets and honeycomb plazas, locked to the shoreline by a mathematical grid of roads and block developments progressively laid around and beyond it over the last 150 years.

The prime location of the Sonar Festival, now in its third year, is the huge marble edifice of the CCCB, a cultural complex recently erected near the boundary where the seed hits the grid. Which seems right, as Sonar does much more than explore and proselytise for electronic music and culture *per se*. It's a place which encourages intelligent debate, communication, useful technologies, commerce, and fun. In the UK, we traditionally repair to the country for our major festivals: our Glastonburies, Phoenixes, Tribal Gatherings. Sonar, with its connected spaces bound together by music, is a kind of experiment in social engineering: what's it like to inhabit wired spaces, and to have them folded into the heart of the city?

Spring Heel Jack

PHOTOS: IRIS GARRELFS

Ken Ishii

The answers are in the experience itself. With 20,000 attendees over three days and nights, it had nearly doubled in size since last year (see issue 138), and there seemed to be a corresponding growth in knowledge. Whereas last year many young Spaniards were hearing drum 'n' bass for the first time, conversations with punters drifting past *The Wire*'s stall in the MACBA Sonarmatica Centre ranged over post-rock, the Leaf label, Rephlex, and even deeper obscurities.

With such expansion came, inevitably, a slight loss of musical focus, and upped the stress-levels for a small staff and crew stretched to the limit. The Chill-Out tent, now placed at a crucial intersection between buildings and filled with trade stalls and a bar, should have been renamed: as often as not it was pumping out neck-ricking House. Yet there were DJs who got the balance right, such as Denmark's DJ Kong, Pita from Vienna, Chantal from Warp and the Spanish live duo EVOL. In the main live room, a DAT-driven Spring Heel Jack dub it up to a seated auditorium while a huge queue for Hector Zazou's set — taking place, in a bizarre programming misjudgment, in the tiny Cinema next door — snakes through the side entrance. Although not one of the lucky few to catch Hector, I did see the amazing former jazzers Finis Africae — Fourth World electrics summoned from a reverberant jungle of pendant percussion-clusters. Shortly after this, General Magic from Vienna's Mego label produce hi-fi alchemy, growing a sequence of crystalline, perverse sound sculptures from bare minerals supplied by a CD randomiser.

Nights in the huge tent at Pobie del Carpa Español are for — 'ow you say? — caning it. This year, star-turn DJs such as Josh Wink, Jeff Mills, Dave Clarke, Richie Hawtin, and Spain's own Frogmen pull and satisfy the crowds, but there's room in-between for live sets by the mighty Autechre and Ken Ishii. Loose to the bone after almost a year of solid touring, Autechre gigs are now wholly improvised affairs, with realtime chemistry between Sean Booth and Rob Brown thrillingly visible. Ishii's full-bodied, wrenching assaults on his mixing desk tone-pots are another joy to watch. As his utter absorption in the mica slivers and beaten metallic surfaces of his peculiar sound infectiously spreads to the crowd, I'm left wondering how the last 72 hours can have evaporated so quickly. It doesn't feel long enough.

ROB YOUNG

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DJ Spooky with DJ Soulslinger, Sub Dub, Ben Neill, Joe Nation, and others

Necropolis
The Dialogic Project

DJ Spooky the Subliminal Kid produced this compilation of New York DJs that crosses the boundaries of ambient dub, trip-hop, house, noise, and jungle.
KFW-185

Don Byron Quintet
No-Vibe Zone

Recorded live during the blizzard of '96. Don Byron, Uri Caine, David Gilmore, Kenny Davis and Marvin "Smitty" Smith.
KFW-191

Mark Dresser
Invocation
Music For Contrabass

Always searching for new sounds, Dresser has broadened the potential for the bass for this solo CD.
KFW-173

Steve Naïve
It's Raining Somewhere

Contemplative jazz from the keyboardist of Elvis Costello and the Attractions.
KFW-198

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david murray octet
dark star
[the music of the grateful dead]

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Saxophonist David Murray blends classic Grateful Dead tunes with his own unique jazz sensibility. The result is a natural and surprising meeting of minds. Arrangements of such tunes as *Dark Star, Shakedown Street, Estimated Prophet* and a duet with Bob Weir on a new composition *Shoulda Had Been Me* show the compatibility of two revolutionary musical forces.

david murray tenor saxophone, bass clarinet
james spaulding alto saxophone, flute
hugh ragin trumpet
craig harris trombone
robert irving III hammond b3 organ, piano,synth
fred hopkins bass
renzell merrit drums
plus special guest
bob weir guitar
and others

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soundings august

Selected highlights of the month's live events, happenings, club spaces and broadcasts

Sonic Youth look to Reading

Festivals/Seasons

Reading 96 Picking through the sonic debris, *Wire*-style acts at this year's rock fest (23-25 August) include Ice T, Butthole Surfers, New Kingdom (25), Soul Coughing, Julian Cope, The Brotherhood (26), Sonic Youth, Tortoise, The Raincoats, Quickspace Supersport, Broadcast, Dirty Three, and more Reading Richfield Avenue, £60 (three days), tickets 0171 344 0044/info 0181 963 0940

Big Chill Gala Now rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances, the Gala offers an opportunity to soak up Electronica DJs, live mixes and global fusioneers in the relaxing environs of deepest East Anglia Performers include LTJ Bukem, Autechre, Mixmaster Morris, Plaid, Global Communication, Ultramarine, Kid Loops, Squarepusher, Andrea Parker, Another Green World, Twisted Science, Wishmountain, Pork Recordings, Skylab Sound System, Being, Spring Heel Jack, Talvin Singh, Up Bustle And Out, Muslimgauze, zoviet*france , Jony Easterby Ice Sculptures, Musa K, African drummers and many more, club sessions by Ninja Tune, Oscillate and Hypnotique Location secret, revealed to ticketholders, 30 August-1 September, £40 (weekend), 0171 281 8106

Blaxploitation Timely retrospective of early 70s cult black film making (3-31 August), including (among many others) *Shaft* (13/29), *Truck Turner* starring Isaac Hayes (22), *Superfly* (25/26), and new print of Melvin Van Peebles's 1971 *Sweet Sweetback's Baadassss Song* (31) London NFT, times vary, £5 50/£4, 0171 928 3232

Sonic Acts Amsterdam festival (28-29 August) taking broad perspective on new directions in electronic music and performance The first day includes music by Stockhausen and Robin Rimbaud/Scanner's new project, *Mapping Stockhausen*, while on 29 David Toop reads from *Ocean Of Sound* and Autechre play live with zoviet*france Both nights feature large programmes of Dutch New Music Amsterdam Paradiso, 5pm-4am each day, two-day pass f25, info 00 31 20 626 4521

Staalplaat Festival Month-long showcase in Berlin (1-31 August) of all things related to the underground Dutch experimental label/radio show/shop/publisher/distribution co Featured artists over the month include Jaap Blonk, People Like Us, Bad Sector, Oval, Kapotte Muziek, Charlemagne Palestine, Deutsch Nepal, Muslimgauze, O Yuki Conjugate/Sons Of Silence, Reptilicus, Dominique Petigand, Thomas Koner/Jurgen Reble, Fiona Tan and BM8 Berlin Prater, Kastanienallee 7-9, info on 00 49 30 440 7136/Fax 00 49 30 448 2660

Earth Energy Festival Orbital, Jah Wobble's Invaders Of The Heart, Nightmares On Wax, Mad Professor, Spooky, LTJ Bukem, MC Det and more perform on the middle day of this environmental event. London Croydon Beddington Park, 3 August, 1-11pm, £17, info/tickets on 01273 708BBB

On Stage

Bonobo's Ark 4 Latest in a series of fluid line-ups including Yumi Hara and vocalist Alquimia London Red Rose Club, 22 August, 129 Seven Sisters Road, 7 30pm, £4/£3, 0171 263 7265

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds + Dirty 3 Dustblown Antipodean double bill London Brixton Academy, 14-15 August, £13 50, 0171 924 9999

Imrat Khan + Swapan Chaudhuri Veteran sitarist Khan, with tabla master Chaudhuri, perform for Overseas Women's Aid charity London RFH2, 10 August, 7 45pm, £15-£9, 0171 960 4242

Billy Cobham Rare UK residency by legendary ex-Miles/Mahavishnu (and currently much-sampled) drummer London Jazz Cafe, 25-29 August, £12 50/£10 50, 0171 916 6000

James Dillon Polyphony Ensemble conducted by Richard Bernas perform *Oceanos* for 16 solo voices, 36 instrumentalists and live electronics London BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, 30 August, 10pm, £8, 0171 589 3202

Marianne Faithfull Singing Brecht

Billy Cobham

and Weill as part of her acclaimed 'Evening In The Weimar Republic' shows London Almeida Theatre, 29 August-3 September, 8pm, £16 50-£10 50, 0171 359 4404

Mamadi Kamara/Almery So Music on ancient African instruments by former partners of Fela Kuti, Ali Farka Toure *et al* London Purcell Room, 25 August, 8pm, £10, 0171 960 4242

Quint + Tortus UK post-rock/reconstruction double bill London Camden Monarch, 12 August, 0171 916 1049

Tony Remy's Stringology First presentation of the guitarists's jazz

suite for strings London Purcell Room, 24 August, 8pm, £10, 0171 960 4242

Gil Scott-Heron Short string of dates by American soul-realist. London Jazz Cafe (12-1S August, 0171 916 6000), Oxford Zodiac (16, 0186S 71S96S)

Baluji Shrivastav Indian improvised music with ensemble Tabla Trouble London 2 13 Club, Stoke Newington Church, 3 August, 2 13pm, £3 12/£2 13, 0171 2S4 240S

Patti Smith Group 8ack to basics approach by the legendary art rock maven, with group that includes Tom Verlaine and Jay Oee Oaugherty London Shepherd's 8ush Empire, 7-8 August, £16 SO 0171 0181 740 7474

Throwing Muses Intimate one-off show by Kristin Hersh's skewy-rock trio, accompanying new LP for 4AO London Garage, 1 August, £8, 0171 963 0940

Ultramarine + Lol Coxhill Two free performances with dance troupe Scalextric in South 8anks 8allroom 8litz season London RFH, 14 August, 1pm/6 30pm, free, 0171 960 4242

Steve Williamson Solo gig by progressive nu fusion saxophonist. London Jazz Cafe, 23 August, £8, 0171 916 6000

Club Spaces

Abacus Cut 'n' paste Electronica night with Sprawl OJs and 8itTonic live London ICA, 7 August, 9pm-1am, £2 SO/£2, 0181 881 0610

Anokha Talvin Singh's weekly Indo-fusion environment London 8lue Note, Mondays, 10pm-3am, £S/£3, 0171 729 8440

Beat Weird Technical bizarrerie from resident Weird 8eats collective, plus guests Richard Fearless (4 August), LS Oiezal + Environmental Science (11), Alex Knight + Stranger (18), 8ushflange + Juryman (2S) London Jazz 8istro, 7pm-12 30am, £2, 0171 236 8112

Blood Sugar New monthly Friday mash-up hosted by Andrew Weatherall, with residents Rick Hopkins, Alex Knight and Rev Or 8ob Jones London 8lue Note, 2 August, 10pm-Sam, £8/£6, 0171 729 8440

Electronic Lounge 8ass for your face with Electronica's mystery' duo, Snappy Sid London ICA, 6 August, 9pm-1am, £2 SO/£2, 0171 498 3032

Manga Oa Intalex (9 August) and Aphrodite (23) join residents Kid and MC 8uzrok at Edinburgh's immersive drum 'n' bass night Edinburgh La 8elle Angele, fortnightly Fridays, £7/£5, 0131 225 2774

Metro The lowdown with the down-low from Jedi Knights/Freakniks/8en Wilcox (10 August), OJ Vadim/Holistic Records/Kevin 8eadle (17), Herbert/Pork Recordings/Patrick Forge (24), and Nightmares On Wax/Andy Smith (Portishead) (31) London Grays, WC1, Saturdays, 10pm-Sam, £8/£6, info 09S6 109162

Rumpus Room Si-(cut)-db and 8itTonic from Suburbs Of Hell (11 August), Nick Corcoran (18), and Sean Fordham (2S) are this month's special guests alongside the regular Merry Pranksters London Albany, Sundays, 7pm-midnight, £3, 0171 388 0S88

Scratch Arrive early for Scratch Cinema (films by Locust, Lo Recordings, Funki Porcini, His Name Is Alive and more), Ian Penman dub OJ set, special live performance by Talvin Singh vs Squarepusher, and OJ Mr Scruff London Spitz, 109 Commercial Street, E1, 14 August, 7pm-midnight, £S/£3, 0171 247 9747

Space New slot at London's Jazz Cafe for upcoming UK artists, this month Spacek (11 August), Pure Instinct (18) and Patrick Clahar Quartet (2S) Sundays, noon-4pm, £3/£2, 0171 916 6000

The Sprawl Nine8ar Records showcase featuring Cujo and Sureshot, plus Funki Porcini and OJ 'O' (Soul Static Sound) in convivial surroundings London Cafe Internet, 22-24 8uckingham Palace Road, 29 August, 7-11pm, £3/£2 SO +SOp m'ship includes half hour free Internet use, info 0181 883 0972

Radio

National

BBC Radio 1

Sound Sirens *Sunday 18 August 7pm* Profiling the curent crop of female DJs [illegible] ding Kemistry & Storm DJ Rap and more

One In The Jungle *Fridays 10pm-midnight* Guest DJs provide hour-long breakbeat mix

John Peel *Saturdays 5-7pm Sundays 8-10pm* The best place to keep up with new rock indie Techno Jungle Electronica dub and the legendary sessions

Annie Nightingale *Saturdays 2-4am* Chilled-out eclectic sounds for the after-club set

Andy Kershaw [illegible] *10pm-12am* World Music from all quarters, folk roots reggae and more

BBC Radio 3

A Corny Concerto *Wednesday 14 August 10.45-11 30pm* Repeat of John Zorn s tribute to the cartoon cut-up composer Carl Stalling

Mixing It *Mondays 10 45-11 30pm* Mark Russell and Robert Sandall s mixilogical selection of avant garde rock, jazz contemporary classical etc Includes sessions by Otomo Yoshihide/Steve Beresford (12) and interview with US composer/leader of Very Very Circus Henry Threadgill (26)

Hear And Now *Fridays 10-12pm* New commissions from John Woolrich and Kevin Volans (9) plus James Dillon composer profile (23)

Impressions *Alternate Saturdays 10 45pm-1am* Modern jazzers in interview and on record

Regional

BBC Derby

Soundscapes [illegible] *3 5pm* Ashley Franklin plays instrumental Electronica contemporary classical systems [illegible] music New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR)

Charlie Gillett *Saturday* [illegible] *7-9pm* Rock [illegible] dub World Music blues R&B and more

BBC Lancashire

On The Wire *Saturdays 12-2am* Anything goes in Steve Barker s seasoned New Music mix dub experimental electronics out rock, free Improv and more

BBC Merseyside

The Late World Noise *Fridays 12 30-2 30am* Out rock, psychedelia Jungle avant dance warped Ambient and global gems [illegible] themed sequences

CRMK (Milton Keynes)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights [illegible] *11pm-2am* Shane Quentin s blend of avant rock to electronic exotica [illegible] with b [illegible] dishes

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Ruff Cuts *Wednesdays* [illegible] *9pm* Latest drum n bass spun by Kenny Ken and DJ Hype

Givin' It Up *Wednesdays 2-4am* New slot with guest DJs on rotation This month Paul Thomas (31 July) Linslee (14 August) Smokey Joe (Calypso) (21) and [illegible] er, Jamiroquai (28)

Intelligent Drum 'N' Bass *Fridays 12-2am* Fabio and Groovender rinse out the jams

Solid Steel *Saturdays 1-3am* Multi-deck mayhem from Coldcut and the Ninja crew

The Chill Out Zone *Sundays 6-7am* Paul Thomas s experimental Ambient, dub and Electronica mix

Patrick Forge [illegible] nnervisions from out jazz to Brazil and psychedelic soul

Kiss 102 FM (Manchester)

Late Night Dance Soundtrack *Weekdays 10pm-2am* Matt Thompson freestyles it from Orbital to Tortoise

Da Intalex Drum 'N' Bass Show *Mondays 8-10pm* Tuff Jungle with XTC and Marcus

808 State *Fridays 8 10pm* Something for the weekend from the veteran crew

Alpha Waves *Saturdays 4-6am* Environments exotica and Isolationism with Stuart James

Disengage *Sundays 4-6am* Electronica and beyond with Autechre s Sean Booth and Rob Brown

RTM (South London)

Sharp As A Needle *Sundays 9 30pm-12am* John Kennedy spins out rock, dub Electronica experimental Ambient HipHop plus live studio jams

Soundings items for the September issue should reach us by ***Friday 9 August***

bites

The Black Dog

Ken Downie is what Netheads call a lurker. In electronic music, whose incessant dialogues are made widely public in the form of the endlessly traded remix, Downie is the hermit flitting in the shadows at the peripheries of the market-place, shouting maniac words of wisdom deep in the night.

He still uses the name The Black Dog, after his two former colleagues, Ed Handley and Andy Turner, went their own way as Plaid, and his retreat is perhaps a partial defensive reaction to what was obviously a traumatic split. In fact, Downie solo seems to make far more sense: he's now free to remain unseen (former tensions were exacerbated by the Plaid members' association with Bjork), and to nurture his many parallel enthusiasms.

Clock on to The Black Dog Website and you'll find far more than the usual discographies and biographies. As well as Downie's cartoon-like illustrations and downloadable sound files — information on how to become The Black Dog for a day — he's reproduced verbatim whole chunks of Pythagoras's *Golden Verses* and Ancient Egyptian Hermetic texts, plus information on UFO sightings, astro-archaeology, and links to various underground publishing activities. All this free info is supplied gratis, and in a spirit of crank-free, informed intelligence not unlike recent popular anti-establishment historians such as Graham Hancock, Robert Bauval and Adrian Gilbert.

"The Christians haven't won," he says, e-mailing at dawn from his Hackney base. "They haven't managed to sweep things under the carpet like they had intended. Hopefully, the more that people believe there is an old wisdom buried out there, the more archaeology will be sanctioned, and the more we will learn about the past, and ultimately ourselves."

How, I ask, was he drawn towards Egyptian mysticism?

"The Gods," comes back the reply. "It's my pantheon of choice, because it's the one I've always felt most attuned to. Since a very early age. It's got an inbuilt psychological tool-kit that respects male and female equally. I live my life by the Hermetic tradition. I try to live honourable in my pursuit of knowledge and happiness."

It all sounds earnest scrolling down a screen, but Ken Downie's lived a little. Following a see-the-world spell in Her Majesty's Navy, he found himself drifting through the nascent rave scene before hooking up with KLF agit-pranksters Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond in the early 90s, and forming The Black Dog with Handley and Turner. After cutting a series of highly prized 12"s for no financial reward, the trio released *The Temple Of Transparent Balls* on GPR, and two brilliant albums, *Bytes* and *Spanners*, on Warp. Yet *Music For Adverts And Short Films*, released this month, is the first opportunity to hear Downie's music in isolation from extraneous input. It's a shimmering collection of 26 Techno mood sculptures, fresh, cocky and dreamlike by turns. "It's the most emotive thing I've ever done," suggests Downie. "The 'best' tunes involve up to three days of complete madness. Stepping 'out there' and bringing back strange fruits is always a risky business." He describes his creative state of mind as one of "non-attachment". "I can't remember the notes I played on "Xeper" because I wasn't there. Something else beyond the 'day-to-day me' was pressing the keys, and directing the composition. I just remember waking up at around 4am, with the finished song on the sequencer."

With advertising now intruding into more and more sacred and public spaces, from railway timetable boards to the Speaking Clock, I guess I don't have to ask whether the album title is ironic. "Advertising sucks. I could write a whole thesis on this one. [The album] is a look at how shallow and superficial we've become. The best products sell themselves by word of mouth."

Ken has been running a Black Dog bulletin board since the early days of the trio, and retains faith in the future of the electronic grapevine to distribute his diverse musical and graphic output. "Marketing leaves me cold," he explains. "I'd like to beam my music directly into people's homes, and live off the donations from what the listeners themselves thought it was worth, if I could."

Information exchanged privately and discreetly between informed individuals — the modern parallel with the secret transmission of arcane knowledge between initiates over the centuries, encoded in myth, lore and music. "Alchemists and magicians had to talk in couched, archaic language, for fear of being burnt as witches or heretics," writes Downie.

Does he practise any kind of magic himself? "Yep, daily." And that's all he typed. **ROB YOUNG** Music for Adverts And Short Films *is released this month on Warp. For The Black Dog Website, go to:* http://www.feedback.com/tbd/

PHOTO MARTIN STEVEN CURTIS

James Plotkin

Considering the amount of high-quality releases James Plotkin has been involved with, it is surprising — and perhaps something of an injustice — that his work is not more widely appreciated. His recordings with the group OLD, collaborations with Zeni Geva's KK Null (1993's *Aurora*), a new collaboration with Scorn's Mick Harris (*Collapse*), and a solo record (*A Strange Perplexing*), on Canada's Discreet/Indiscreet label, all provide ample evidence of Plotkin's versatility and talent. His most recent project is *The Joy Of Disease*, on John Zorn's Avant label.

"I wanted to work with people whose ideas I respect and admire," states Plotkin, explaining the genesis of *The Joy Of Disease*. "This time I used Mick Harris, Franz Treichler from The Young Gods and Ruth Collins on vocals. I will continue this project, but the line-up is not going to be fixed. It will primarily be a vehicle for ideas that are at variance with what I am doing as OLD. OLD itself is currently metamorphosing into a more consistent, song-based entity."

The Joy Of Disease exhibits the sort of poignant beauty with melancholic undertones that was captured on early Cocteau Twins releases. It is a formula many have tried to emulate with varying degrees of success, but Plotkin's keen ear for glistening melodies and transfixing arrangements place him well ahead of the opposition. In addition, Plotkin is an accomplished master of hypnotic repetition. This is dronology with soul. "I've become addicted to repetition in music, which is something I used to undervalue," he says. "However, I think there should be subtle shifts within an ostensibly repetitive framework. I like those subtle shifts in sound, those slight modulations over extended periods of time. It gives vibrancy to the sound, gives it life, helps it evolve a little at a time. If I am in the right frame of mind I can listen to a loop for several hours at a time. [*Collapse*] is based on repetitive structures. It features guitar loops and samples from quite mundane sources which are heavily processed. Of course, I have worked with Mick before when I contributed guitar parts to Scorn, so I find him easy to work with and we have similar ideas about sound."

Given Plotkin's penchant for repetition and studio-based composition, it was surprising to see him teaming up for an improvised performance with Japanese percussionist Ikue Mori at New York's Knitting Factory recently (see *The Wire* 149). Yet Plotkin perceives no incongruity between the two approaches. "It was really enjoyable, that performance. I think it is possible to adapt to different ways of working. It is a challenge for a musician. I have done improvised performances in the past and will do them in the future. It was a good experience working with a musician like Ikue Mori. I have a lot of admiration for her work."

Although primarily associated with the guitar, Plotkin utilises all manner of electronic sound-producing equipment, and has released Techno tracks under several pseudonyms. Contrary to popular belief, there are those in the US avant rock underground who are deeply interested in Techno, drum 'n' bass, and all the related hybrid forms. Plotkin certainly is, but also criticises the perceived elitism of such scenes. "It is easy for some people to be prejudiced against these forms. Live music has suffered, and the market is flooded with a great deal of dross. Also there is the pathetic elitism involved. But in spite of all this there is a percentage of the music which I really enjoy listening to. Some artists are taking 'dance' music much further than others, and these are the people who really appeal to me. But the so-called 'scene' annoys me; the fact that a DJ gets more for one evenings work than I can earn in a month simply by playing other peoples music is something that I find distasteful. But the electronic music I prefer is the music from the 70s and 80s. Those people — Cluster, for example — were much more visionary, and their records were far more experimental than any of the Techno I have heard to this day." **JOHN EVERALL** *The Joy Of Disease, Collapse and A Strange Perplexing are out now on Avant, Sombient and Discreet/Indiscreet respectively*

Soma

"We just try to have as much fun as possible..." Not the kind of statement you might associate with Australian Techno-Industrial doom-meisters Soma. The group's new release, *The Inner Cinema*, is thick with muscular, multi-layered mini-epics of booming beats and polyphonic sampling, each crafted with heroic discipline and precision. But Soma aren't simply geeky trainspotters of sound. DJ David Thrussell and Pieter Bourke, in London as support act to somnabulent superstars Dead Can Dance, prove to be disconcertingly normal, unassuming but totally committed to what they do.

Soma grew out of a flourishing Melbourne Electronica scene in the early 90s, Thrussell originally working with Snog, Bourke with Eden. "The thing with Australia," comments Bourke, "is that the distances between cities give rise to very localised scenes, very particular phenomena in different places. That's how fragmented the music scene is there."

Perhaps that intense localisation has created the super-fertility of new Australian music-making: the Extreme label, Darrin Verhagen, Paul Schutze, and Thrussell's own Black Line projects.

The new album seems like a monument to watchmakerly craftsmanship in sound. "Actually, we spent a lot more time on the *first* album," says Bourke, referring to 1995's *Hollow Earth*. "This album is the result of a much more intense and focused effort. We can work instinctively together now. Not a lot of things have to be said."

There's an aptly filmic feel to *The Inner Cinema* and its varied terrains of half-lights, notably a taste for surreal manifestations of Spaghetti Western guitars. "That's David, with him being a DJ he gets to listen to a lot more music than me," says Bourke.

Bourke is keen to point out that the duo don't use tapes on stage, only turntables and electronics. "I want to try and balance on-the-spot improvisation with composed stuff to the point where audiences never hear the same thing twice. And we love to see people get up and dance to our music. It makes shows so much more enjoyable for us." **PAUL STUMP** *The Inner Cinema is released this month on Extreme (through SAM/Vital)*

underground resistors

The musicians behind Germany's mysterious **Basic Channel** label are Techno-archaeologists, anonymous electricians inhabiting the wired-up cities of Berlin and Detroit. Biba Kopf tracks down the invisible men of electronic music

Much has been made of the mechanical side of Techno What of its sentient aspect? The Basic Channel CD, an utterly absorbing, if somewhat misleading, document of the Berlin label's story so far, is positively crawling with lifeforms. Opening with groaning, protean, grub-shaped sounds straining to burst the constraints of the loop that would contain them, it shifts to a stubborn, twitching slug of noise, alive with guitar mites hived from Manuel Gottsching's *E2-E4* Then the music submerges itself into the bowels of the city Below the surface lies its nervous system of subway lines, dusty, dirt-encrusted cables, pipes, tunnels, energy and communications networks Far from this most subterranean of label's dance disc origins, the reworked Basic Channel CD sounds like it set out to tap the system's energies, capture its underground echoes, read and feed into its steady flows of communication The rhythms feel like severed live wires instinctively feeling their way back to the energy source And when they finally connect, on the trail-out grooves called, appropriately enough, "Radiance i/Radiance iii", the rhythmic pulses burst, irradiating the city above and suffusing it with a shimmering electronic glow

On the journey through the bowels of the city, Basic Channel inadvertently cut the clogged veins of the old Berlin underground and let flow whatever lifeforce was left in that venerable corpse into the electronic bitstreams presently connecting Berlin and Detroit Techno In this sense, the Basic Channel CD is as much a Berlin landmark as the highly influential Liaisons Dangereuses disc from the early BDs, or the famously over-valued, if extremely appealing, *E2-E4* Yet its creators seem to have only very grudgingly brought it into being They have let it out unprotected in a coarse cardboard postal envelope, stickered with a photocopied label containing a minimum of information, while on the back the only indications of its source are a barcode, a Berlin fax number, brief publishing details, and another sticker listing the catalogue numbers of the nine Basic Channel 12" singles from where the music has been lifted and reconfigured anew The communique concludes with a terse instruction "Buy vinyl"

If Basic Channel is suspicious of the enthusiasm shown for its activities by music journalists, it is not without good reason When I meet the two men behind the label, Mark and Moritz (single names only, please), in Berlin's Cafe Einstein, they stare blankly with stonefaced expressions as I gush forth praise for their activities (and they ask me not to tape our conversation) That's all very well, they say, but we think you ought to know where we really come from The CD is a precis from some four and a half hours of vinyl and represents a home-listening edit of records intended for DJ or dancehall use The following evening they invite me to the Hard Wax record shop in Kreuzberg For three hours I am blitzed with a brief history of Chicago House and Detroit Techno the early Chicago Acid trax of Phuture, Armando and Armani, and then moving onto Detroit for Cybotron, Model 5DO, Underground Resistance, Jeff Mills, Robert Hood, Juan Atkins (Ironically, the blind reverence they display for this music mirrors the enthusiasm that is directed at their own releases and of which they remain so suspicious)

This is the key to Basic Channel Where Techno hurtles blinkered into the future, Mark and Moritz have turned their backs on it Theirs is an archaeology of Techno, almost, which burrows beneath the future-shock debris to work up new geometric shapes from the music's original architectonic ground plans

It's a kind of Techno classicism, one best heard on vinyl, sure enough The duo are so committed to vinyl that they have established their own cutting plant to ensure their records obtain the desired dynamic range And on vinyl Basic Channel's minimalism does work a wholly other kind of magic But the CD works well as an entity because Basic Channel has worked a singular groove over the nine records released since the label was founded in 1993 But what you don't get on compact disc is the same dynamic sense that the musicians are exploring every possible rhythmic permutation Early tracks lock distorted, needle-dirt blocks of noise into hypnotic rhythm loops that gradually push out of phase, compelling minor changes that trigger seismic shifts in the sound layers Over the course of the label's releases, some of them running longer than the average LP, the sound materials grow cleaner, the outlines more sharply defined For example, a minimal dub enhancement accords a concussed clarity to their latest and most beautiful single yet Titled "Phylyps Trak II", it perversely centres an impaired skank, lit from behind so as to cast distorted shadow rhythms dancing at its feet

Since its inception Basic Channel has become a byword for a certain kind of minimalism, where tracks evolve from the basest of sounds, and the records themselves continue to draw attention to their format by dissolving the distinction between recorded and realtime scratches and distortions They remind you that these records are there to be played, not to be archived and cherished

Basic Channel's modus operandi is governed by the DJ culture in which it is steeped Mark and Moritz don't do interviews, they say, not because they're into self-mystification, but because they don't have to Their music circulates through dance music's own distribution and communications networks Everybody who wants to gets to hear of a new release somehow

In DJ culture, labels more than the artists define the music So music that doesn't fit the Basic Channel narrative is channeled through parallel labels Chain Reaction for more avantish releases from the likes of Porter Ricks (Thomas Koner and Andreas Mellwig), Main Street for, to these ears, uninspired House-y vocal tracks, M for Moritz's earthshaking Maurizio releases, and, finally, the CD label Imbalance for more self-consciously 'experimental' projects such as Wieland Samolak's soundscaping *Steady State Music* To these can be added the Burial Mix label, which houses their newest 1D" release, the attractive if slight, dub-enhanced "Never Tell You" by Rhythm & Sound

The genealogy of Basic Channel-related labels is complicated by the elaborate miscegenation of particular projects that holds the family together For instance, the deep, reverberant Kodo thump of Vainqueur's "Lyot", a real depth-charge of a track, repeats through Maurizio, Basic Channel (BCD3) and Chain Reaction releases And "Reduce", which also carries a Vainqueur credit, reprises the "Lyot" method of setting the whole dancefloor trembling to a rumbling military roll beaten out on a giant bass drum

If there is any conclusion to be drawn from the Basic Channel family's way of working, it is that, in dance as in any other popular music form prone to be despoiled by the raging egos of its participants, a state of grace is best achieved and sustained by pursuing an aesthetic of disappearance that preserves its makers from the distorting gaze of the media and its public In the process, the label has released a succession of records hallmarked by the kind of beauty which characterised the artefacts produced in utter anonymity by the craftsmen of antiquity ☐ *Basic Channel fax 00 49 30 832 49 47 Basic Channel releases are distributed by EFA*

PHOTO: JOHNNY GREIG

Freestyle fellowship

Our August offer: bag a double *Freezone* CD plus a year's supply of *The Wire* for just £30

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JMJ + Richie
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Claude Young
Blak Crowê
Mixmaster Morris vs Jonah Sharpe
Nu Era
Herbert.
2 Player
Future 3
Kid Loops
The Illuminati of Hedfuk
Kruder & Dorfmeister
Howie B
Glenn Underground
PFM
Josh Wink
Envoy
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.O.rang's rural studio is a dream-lab for conjuring primeval visions and quantum leaps in sound. Story by Matt ffytche

Elsenham idyllic, commuter-belt England From the train it's a flick-book of clean washing, St George's Cross T-shirts and tumbling roses A postcard of waving fields

This is O rang's new habitat Two years ago, after a decade playing drums and bass with Talk Talk, Lee Harris and Paul Webb sealed themselves in their Tottenham studio, The Slug, and produced the exotic and vertiginous *Herd Of Instinct* album Now they've abandoned The Slug, following cheaper studio sites and the climatic shift up the Tottenham Hale line to the Essex-Cambridgeshire border

It seems like a major rupture, but O rang carry their jungle with them It's there in the name "In Asia there's no distinction between apes and man," explains Lee "Everything is Orang-something Apes are Orang-Utan It means wild men of the woods"

With *Herd*, the duo evolved a musical process somewhere between cosmic freak-out and sound sculpture While they jammed for weeks over different rhythms, friends — Matt Johnson, Boymerang's Graham Sutton on guitar, Mark Feltham with his searing harmonica — would drop by adding their own emotional pitch "We would reel off the sound according to the emotion we had on the day," says Lee "The tapes ran all the time" There then followed a process of alchemical distillation "Out of a 20 minute jam, you'll get a minute that's exciting" The raw material was digitally sifted, working through lures of esoteric beats, pipes, scraped and plucked strings, until the track emerged like some primeval totem

Herd had an expansive, freeform feel The duo's new release, *Fields And Waves*, is more solid, more designed Partly they were forced into a more considered approach by technical nightmares "The gear, which was new for the last album, all started packing up," explains Lee "We were stopping and starting every six months — we actually lost the album twice" But there was also a decision to exercise more control "We'd done the free-spirited O rang thing," says Paul So this time they held on to parts longer, and worked mostly on their own

This approach has swung them marginally away from the realms of sonic freefall several tracks tilt towards the kind of congested angst familiar from Matt Johnson's The The recordings But even here the sound still swarms unexpectedly Suddenly the music flocks, twists its composure, the riffs are dissipated into a multitude of plucked reverberations O rang's is an intense music, a swelling, sometimes subterranean sound, but one that's strangely involuted, floating between musical categories I quiz them on various aesthetic vectors free jazz, Miles Davis in the 70s, Krautrock, the Ambient scene Jaki Liebezeit is Lee's great favourite, but otherwise, I might as well have been lobbing potatoes at them "Don't know what scenes are out there," they chime Paul professes not to know about rock music, and I have to remind him about the ten years with Talk Talk "Oh yeah, *that* was rock," he laughs

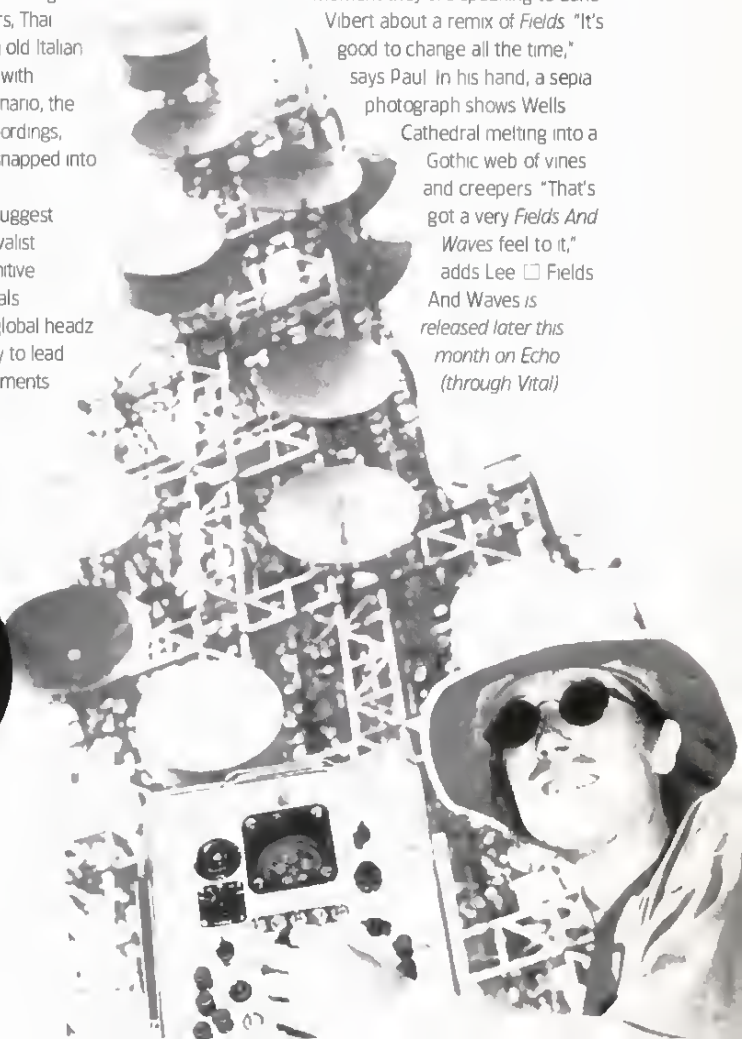
They're keen to stave off any manifestos or New Music philosophies The music is a private experience, an exercise in emotional resonance "It's not a music where you can get it in the first hit It takes time to unveil its secrets," explains Paul "Our records are best played on your own, late at night That's when it hits you deepest, that's its function" Compared with the abstracted digital circuits of Ambient, their tactile, acoustic approach to music, producing all their own sounds, makes it more responsive to fleeting emotional impulses To this end they've gathered an adventure playground of resonant materials clapped out guitars played with beaters, a zither-like zin, sitars, Thai harps and mouth flutes, a Bali-phone, an old Italian accordion Paul's converted barn is lined with harmoniums In a severe earthquake scenario, the house could start to resonate its own recordings, while the world of Electronica would be snapped into Zen-like silence

The battery of ethnic instruments can suggest they've headed for the hills in tribal survivalist mode The Slug was kitted out like a primitive shrine, complete with day-glo Aztec murals However, they balk at the idea of being global headz their anthropological trails are more likely to lead to Oxfam in Wood Green "We buy instruments but no one ever shows us how to play them," says Paul "We're like kids with new toys"

Fields And Waves refers to quantum physics and the discovery that particles can be waves "There's fields of these particles moving in waves through other things," says Lee excitedly In his hand, a photo of a bulbous BT mast — steel cactus with satellite blooms "These things are going up all over the place You're being bombarded all the time by waves" The picture belongs to a project involving 13 points all over South East Anglia, a kind of psychogeographic clock. Each point is recorded by the global positioning system, giving co-ordinates for longitude, latitude and altitude The artist Tom Phillips is a precursor here, taking photographs of the same location over a number of years, charting the flux Other shots show the beach at Dunwich, an electric substation, a radio mast silhouetted like a stupa from Borabadur In ten years time, some of them will be under the sea "People don't realise that hills move"

O rang's strongest card is their strange dialectic of grating against themselves, keeping elements of rock's unitary energy, but also wanting its opposite — an open-ended abrasiveness, an emotional diffusion, hills that move And at their best they achieve a scarred and textured beauty that steers clear of fixed forms

There's a lot of material left over from the album, but the next one will be a fresh start At some point they'd like to do EPs of dub and drum music At the moment they are speaking to Luke Vibert about a remix of *Fields* "It's good to change all the time," says Paul In his hand, a sepia photograph shows Wells Cathedral melting into a Gothic web of vines and creepers "That's got a very *Fields And Waves* feel to it," adds Lee ☐ Fields And Waves *is released later this month on Echo (through Vital)*



From his Velvet Lounge bar on Chicago's Southside, **Fred Anderson** is keeping the freewheeling intensity of 60s space jazz alive. Interview by John Corbett

fluid fixture

Jazz enjoys a constant tug-of-war between change and stasis — evolution, slow transformation, sudden rupture, and the eternal return. That underlying push-me pull-you is the creative contradiction that keeps the music interesting, soaks it with a sense of tradition and ensures its relevance.

Fred Anderson knows about change and about standing ground. It's an unseasonably cool July afternoon in Chicago. The saxophonist steps out in front of the Velvet Lounge, a modest bar he's owned, operated and bartended for 14 years, and calmly surveys his 'hood. Things are in flux. A slick, incongruous bank has sprouted across the street, anticipating the encroachment of yuppies seeping south from the city. A great old hotel on his block has just come down, giving the construction jungle a vacant slash-and-burn feel, flattening earth for developer snakes. The Velvet is due for big changes, too — plans are afoot for sweeping renovations designed to metamorphose the long-standing Sunday jam session into a full-service music hotspot, replete with a restaurant and 300-seat theatre.

Fred hovers beneath the bar's hand-painted sign and blows a signature line on his black tenor sax. The rebounding sound slaps back hard off a brick building down the way. "I used to practise outside," he explains. "I couldn't practise in the house, so I'd go across the street and practise behind a shed. This is one of the reasons I developed that *sound*, 'cause outside the sound carried. People would say, 'I could hear you man, two or three blocks away!' I was uninhibited — I could play as loud as I wanted to."

Anderson's huge sound is Chicago jazz legend, and he's wielded it in some of the classic post-free jazz sessions. A founding member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Muscians, the Mississippi-born musician has been a fixture on the Chicago scene since the mid-60s, providing an anchor through the turbulent, change-filled decades that followed (during which much of the AACM split town), and serving as a beacon for younger, exploratory players like trombonist/computer improvisor George Lewis, percussionist Hamid Drake and multiple reedsman Douglas Ewart. A pre-Art Ensemble Joseph Jarman was in Anderson's 1965 quartet. 30 years later, Fred has just issued *Birdhouse*, only his third studio record.

At 67, Anderson is an elder statesman. But to look at him — better yet, to hear that massive tone — you'd never mistake him for a relic. In fact his sound has undergone subtle changes in just the last six months, following dreaded dental work that replaced most of his upper teeth. "It was actually one of the most dramatic changes in my life, though most people might not hear a big difference at all."

Over the last few years, Anderson's renown has spread quickly. In 1994 the Okka Disk label set out to disseminate his woefully obscure wonders. Along with *Birdhouse*, he's made a live trio record with Drake and pianist Marilyn Crispell, and issued a precious tape from the vaults of duets with the late AACM drummer Steve McCall. "It's one of the things I appreciate about Bruno Johnson [of Okka Disk]," he says. "How he has the confidence in me, knowing he can trust me to do my best. To be treated as an artist, not as a piece of property or something, makes me feel good." With his newfound acclaim, Anderson has had to face another kind of change, playing at international festivals, making new records, drawing the praise some greats never get. "That puts a lot of pressure on me. I've got to prepare. I've been on the sidelines, like a football player who finally gets a chance to be a starter. I'm preparing myself for that, mentally, physically."

Back inside the Velvet, Anderson rifles through some practice exercises he's written out, many of them yellowed with age. Though he long ago moved indoors, he still practises a couple of hours each day. "You practise to get free," he says. "So everything will just be part of you, you won't be thinking about it, you just express yourself. It's like walking, like life — you don't think about it, you walk, you live." When Anderson plays, he bends way, way down, Atlas-like, his horn teasing the floor. In fact, another secret ingredient in his sound comes from early years spent practising in a sitting position, with the saxophone actually resting on the ground. "It seemed like the air came straight out," he laughs.

George Lewis, who worked extensively with Fred in the 70s, explains the specifics of getting inside Anderson's concept. "You had to find a way to play like Fred. In fact, you had to *become* Fred. The relation between what the paper said and what was played was elastic, you had to listen to him play it."

Openness, independence, readiness to adapt to unforeseen circumstances, minimising repetition, learning from your experience. Anderson holds these values dear. "The only thing you can really change is your attitude," he stresses as he unlocks the Velvet's front door and kicks off his bartending day. "Change your attitude, you can grow, stick with a bad attitude, that'll kill you. How else you gonna grow? You ain't gonna grow no taller!" ■ *Birdhouse is out now on Okka Disk (through Harmonia Mundi)*

PHOTO GLENDA H KAPSALIS

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Omni Trio's pioneering drum 'n' bass owes its visceral power to the melodic counterweights of minimalism and piano jazz. Interview by Peter Shapiro

Rob Haigh, the thirtysomething [illegible] behind Omni Trio, seems [illegible] out of a tradition of electronic music in the sense that it's created out of sequencers and samplers and music that technology [illegible] way. "Live instrumentation doesn't really appeal to me." Strangely enough, Haigh has been at the forefront of a trend that is seemingly making drum 'n' bass — a genre born out of the brute physical imperatives of speed, adrenaline, sensory overload and pharmacology — more melodic, streamlined, more traditionally musical.

The first wave of Omni Trio releases, particularly the immortal "[illegible] Spheres", introduced piano elegies and rhapsodic [illegible] the breakbeat matrix. Haigh's [illegible] as the minimalist's equivalent of the [illegible] and jazz-based astral projections [illegible] roughly the same time by LTJ Bukem and [illegible]. Although he has altered course with his latest release, *Hoonta / Sunoo*, it's still possible to hear the influence of a formative period listening to Philip Glass. There's a track on the album, "Serpent Navigation", where the [illegible] starts off with just [illegible] Ambient-ish chords and then a shaker comes in and a breakbeat develops out of that. There are all sorts of other sounds, a bassline, chimes, a little vocal, [illegible] but some things are running on 4/4 [illegible] there's a 5/8 thing going on at some [illegible] Steve Reich kind of thing. I always liked the fact that these things went out of time and then [illegible] back in, playing a trick on your [illegible]." Further evidence of Haigh's liking for [illegible] to the Eric Satie/Keith Jarrett [illegible] "O Pts 1 & 2" which appeared on Lo [illegible] *Extreme Possibilities* compilation.

At the same time as he was [illegible] art space minimalism, Haigh was involved with Total Club, a group which occupied the same avant while-love territory as Cabaret Voltaire and 23 Skidoo. Perhaps explaining why so many of his fellow travellers from that period are now reinventing themselves and hanging around the periphery of dance music, Haigh says, "I think that a lot of that Techno and House stuff of 89 and 90, stuff like Warp and Orbital, came out of that Cabaret Voltaire thing. During that period when we were doing 'avant funk', it was basically setting up a rhythm, playing a repetitive bassline and experimenting over that framework. That is basically what we're doing now."

For a while, Haigh "tagged along" with ur-[illegible] Nurse With Wound, then "blacked out" on what was current in music. "I think a lot of people go through a period where they lose interest in contemporary music, but I was lucky that I managed to get excited again. I'd gone through that whole 70s thing, the punk thing, the post-punk experimental thing, and then suddenly it was all Spandau Ballet and the New Romantics. Because I lost a [illegible] interest, I didn't manage to [illegible] the HipHop thing [illegible] but people who work in drum 'n' bass. So I didn't really come from that angle. It was House and [illegible] that really got me interested again."

The result of his renewed interest was a series of singles on Moving Shadow, and his album, *The Deepest Cut*, that fused the musicianship of his source material (the piano introduction on "Renegade Stalker" tore a page out of the Michael Nyman songbook with stirring [illegible]). It was not [illegible] suggestive of [illegible] ambition [illegible] ha[illegible] overt[illegible] and the [illegible]

With [illegible] Haigh [illegible] from the [illegible] contrast, negotiations of a [illegible] Manfred Mann [illegible] actually be [illegible] house [illegible] drum 'n' [illegible] breaks are [illegible] feels like [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] myself going [illegible] track [illegible] [illegible] I want [illegible] take it. I'll do [illegible] something and then [illegible] bassline is the [illegible] way I've used some [illegible] the album. I've [illegible] do more of the [illegible] The piano has got a [illegible] it actually plays [illegible] bass as some tracks [illegible] an anchor to the beats: [illegible] the beats in a more organic [illegible] I don't see that [illegible] to allude [illegible] a different [illegible]

[illegible] *Deepest Cut*, Haigh's music [illegible] collisions between melody [illegible] process of building from [illegible] method appears to run [illegible]

[illegible] rules of [illegible] Haigh [illegible] [illegible] my music is [illegible] the [illegible] diluted. I will [illegible] it differently." [illegible] *Shadow* [illegible]

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into the mystic

Following in the footsteps of Brian Jones, Ornette Coleman, William Burroughs and others, last year Sonic Youth guitarist **Lee Ranaldo** headed into Morocco's Rif mountains to seek out the legendary trance music of **The Master Musicians Of Jajouka**. In this extract from his diary, he describes his intoxicating encounter with the village musicians, and outlines the battle currently raging over the music's birthright

The Master Musicians Of Jajouka

PHOTO MONTAGE LEE RANALDO/LEAH SINGER

In September of last year, in the course of a two week trip to Morocco, Leah Singer and I were lucky enough to pay a visit to the remote mountain village of Jajouka, where the legendary Master Musicians reside. First brought to the attention of the world via recordings made by The Rolling Stones' Brian Jones in the mid-60s, their music has touched many and various souls since that time. The following text is an excerpt from my own Moroccan journal, specific to that visit.

A few words are needed in preface to the text, however, which was written in Fes in September 95.

In the time since my visit to Jajouka I have been made aware of a situation which places a sad weight upon the beautiful music which emanates from this little village. It seems there are currently two groups of musicians claiming to be the 'real' Master Musicians Of Jajouka/Joujouka (they're even arguing over the spelling). One group, the 'Jajouka' faction, is led by Bachir Attar, whose father was the leader of the group in the 60s when Brian Jones and Ornette Coleman made their visits (it is this group I have written about here, and for reasons of pragmatism, I have used the 'Jajouka' spelling throughout). The 'Joujouka' faction is in the care of Mohammed Hamri, who has been involved with the village since the 50s and 60s, and who had a hand in bringing Brion Gysin and Paul Bowles there.

It seems that neither group is willing to acknowledge the right of the other to exist, and both groups are fighting for the name which Brian Jones's recordings have made so well known. Players which appeared on those original recordings now appear to reside among both current groups.

Although I have not spoken to Hamri, I have had conversations with Frank Rynne, a London-based sound engineer who has made extensive recordings of the Hamri-led group in Joujouka. I am in the process of attempting to find out more about this troubling situation, and in no way do I wish the text which follows to appear to be an endorsement of one group over the other. I have heard the recordings made by both groups, and consider them all to be quite remarkable, and worthy of your attention.

Suffice it to say that my hope, and the hopes of many others in the music community, are for some sort of resolution to these conflicts that will allow both groups to co-exist and continue to bring this beautiful music out into the world.

— Lee Ranaldo, NYC July 96

Fes, 4 September 1995

So much has happened in the last 36 hours that I am nearly at a loss for where to begin, and already exhausted at the task of attempting to transcribe even a small portion of it here. Maybe just simply exhausted will do. There has not been much sleep. Leah and I arrived today in the great imperial city of Fes. We took dinner on the balcony of our room at the elaborately-tiled Palais Jamais, which is probably the most beautiful, elegant hotel in all Morocco.

We have traveled a rather circuitous route from Tanger, that discordant port city on the northwestern edge of Africa, famous for its expatriate community in the 40s and 50s. Its loose morals became the model for "Interzone" in William Burroughs's *Naked*

Lunch, which was written during Burroughs's stay in the city

We had been trying to reach Bachir Attar, leader of The Master Musicians Of Jajouka Leah knows him from New York, where he lives half the year with his wife, the photographer Cherie Nutting It was our hope that he would escort us on a visit to his village of Jajouka — magick, mystical site in Morocco's Rif mountains Bachir's father led The Master Musicians in the 60s, when Brian Jones made his famous visit, and was also there in the 40s and 50s when Paul Bowles, William Burroughs, Brion Gysin and others visited this (then) little known village to hear the wild trance music being made there When his father died, Bachir took his place as leader of the group and master soloist on the rhaita (the split-reed horn used in these parts, sort of similar to an oboe or clarinet)

> **“ Bachir dragged out a battered Ampeg guitar which had been left here by Blondie's Chris Stein sometime in the late 70s ”**

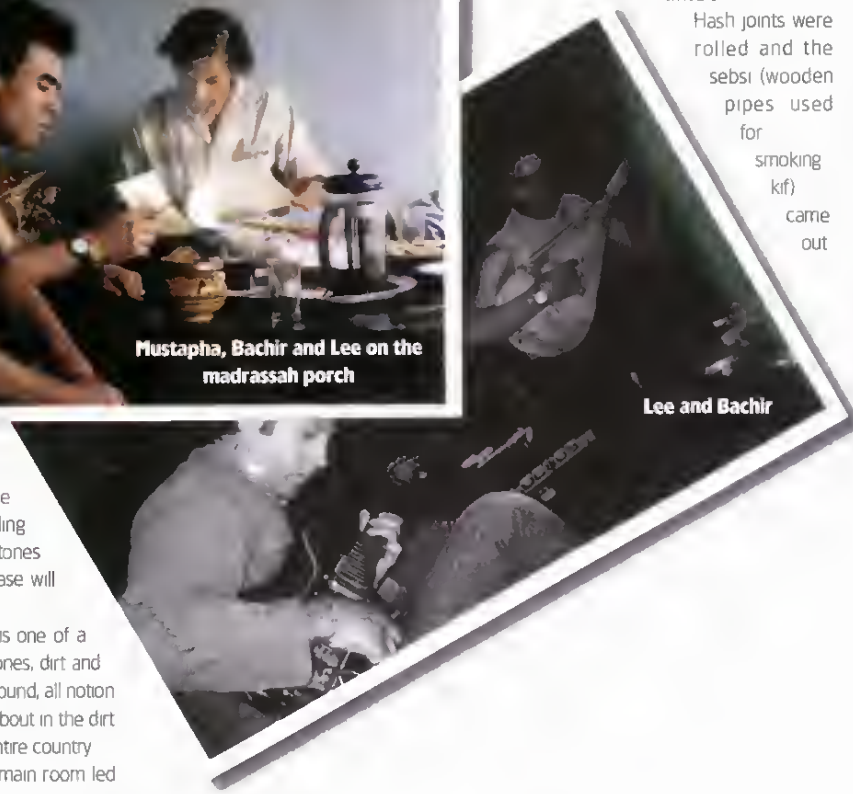
We heard through Absalom, the desk clerk at the Hotel Continental, that Bachir would be in town this afternoon We left word that we would return by 2 30, and arranged a price of 400 dirhams with Achmed, our driver, to visit the Souq-al-Ahad (Sunday market) out in the country about 25 miles from Tanger

We returned to find that Bachir had called, and would come in one hour or so Suddenly he was there in our room, fresh from a visit with Bowles and Mrabet, Bowles's long-time protege We would drive to Jajouka — two and a half hours away — with Bachir and his brother Mustapha in Bachir's white Mercedes (car of choice here if y'cn get it), sleep there that night, and arrange for our driver to collect us near there in the morning to continue our route to Fes

We renew acquaintances in the car and talk about music Bachir and the musicians have just come from a festival gig in Spain, and will kick off their first US tour next month in NYC, the day after I depart with Sonic Youth on our own US tour to support *Washing Machine* Just my luck.

We stop in Ksar el Kabir two hours later, the night dark and raining lightly, to buy groceries for the 13-man musical 'family' awaiting our arrival up the hill We shop in a funky, bustling market medina — little alleys with headless chickens hanging and fresh fruits and vegetables, dogs and kids running around, smoke from cooking meats clouding the lanes, wild smells of all sorts everywhere At the butcher's shop, we buy an entire leg of lamb, which is quickly and expertly hacked into segments with a giant cleaver, and wrapped in pages from the local newspaper

Mustapha, Bachir and Lee on the madrassah porch



Lee and Bachir

PHOTOS LEAH SINGER

Next stop is the house of Bachir's sister In Jajouka there are no phones, no electricity or running water Bachir must use his sister's phone to call an official in Rabat concerning the copyrights to the *Brian Jones Presents The Pipes Of Pan At Jajouka* record, which The Rolling Stones have finally allowed The Master Musicians to re-release (The Stones have controlled the copyrights all these years) Money from this release will bring much needed funds to the musicians

Bachir's sister's place is the first Moroccan house we get to enter It is one of a number of two-storey cement structures situated in a field of rubble, stones, dirt and rubbish The houses appear to have been spirited to this dusty patch of ground, all notion of sidewalks, grass, or paved streets left behind Little kids were running about in the dirt of broken bricks and those ubiquitous black plastic bags which litter this entire country

Inside, the house was sparse and serene Curtained doorways in the main room led to a kitchen, bedrooms, and other rooms We exchanged awkward smiles with family and kids as Bachir made his calls Another musician named Tahir joined us here and we set off for the final stretch to the village

I'd heard about the mountain road up to Jajouka — a rutted, rock-littered track climbing into the hills of the Rif, and it was exactly as described Moroccan soil is fraught with stones, boulders and detritus of all sorts, glacial debris so thick that farming here must be an arduous task at best Near Jajouka, Mustapha and Tahir got out and walked so the Benz wouldn't bottom out As we pulled into the village the headlights flashed across small blue-washed houses and thatch-roofed sheds the rusty color of the earth

We drove up to the madrassah, or clubhouse, where the musicians lived, in strict segregation from the women of the village Here they do all the cooking, cleaning and caretaking for themselves There were a few lamps glowing, and a couple of men were hanging out on a little porch under the roof of the lodge

All manner of wild Moroccan men slowly appeared, welcoming us warmly There were old wizards in pointy-hooded djellabas (a long, loose outer garment worn in Arabic countries) and younger guys in T-shirts Soon we were drinking super-sweet mint tea and tuning Bachir's guimbri (a three-stringed mandolin of sorts) to match an old, battered Ampeg electric guitar which he had dragged out of his little room off the porch and placed in my hands It seems this guitar was left here by Chris Stein of Blondie sometime in the late 70s Bachir tapped a small amplifier into a generator line which was used to give the madrassah some semblance of electric power for certain brief periods each night Hand drums came out and soon we were all jamming

Before I even realized what was happening I was stepping out onto weird sonic wings of sound against the guimbri, drums and Tahir's violin accompaniment It was so immediately relaxing there, on that wild African porch, with the rain falling lightly in the dark night, that I really didn't think twice about it

Hash joints were rolled and the sebsi (wooden pipes used for smoking kif) came out

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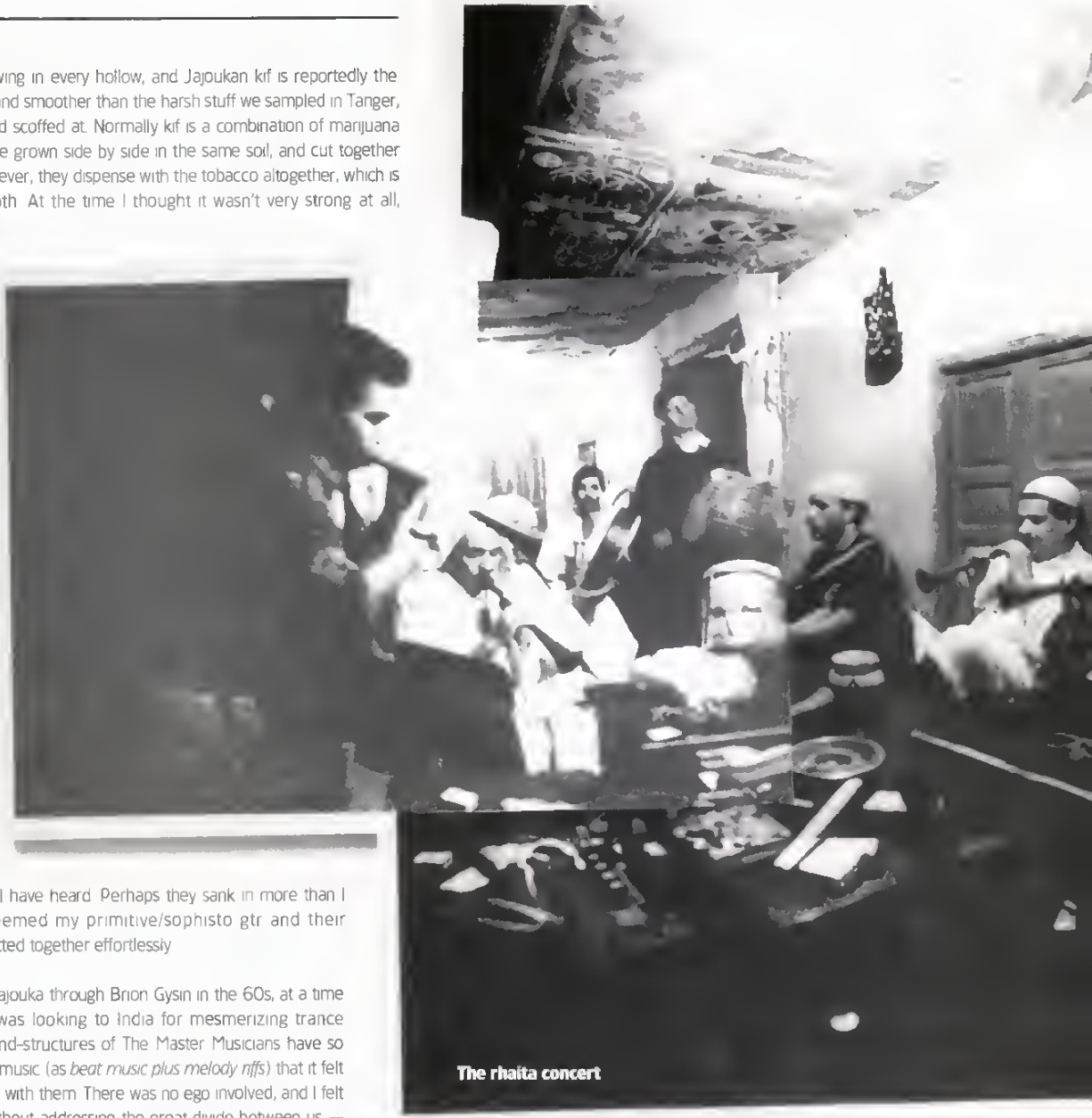
The Rif is thick with kif growing in every hollow, and Jajoukan kif is reportedly the best, it was certainly milder and smoother than the harsh stuff we sampled in Tanger, which Bachir had sniffed and scoffed at. Normally kif is a combination of marijuana and black tobacco, which are grown side by side in the same soil, and cut together for smoking. In Jajouka, however, they dispense with the tobacco altogether, which is why the stuff was so smooth. At the time I thought it wasn't very strong at all, compared to how I had imagined it would be, because we smoked it all night and never really felt out of sorts. Tonight, however, as I write this in Fes on the hotel balcony, I am pleasantly high after smoking only a couple of sebsi-bowls: perhaps the setting in Jajouka was already so far out that the kif could add little more to it.

We jammed several surprisingly easy improvisations, feeling each other out. Bachir had one pedal — a digital delay — similar to one I often use, and its gentle slapback reminded me of modern African gtr sounds I have heard. Perhaps they sank in more than I had noted because it seemed my primitive/sophisto gtr and their sophisto/primitive rhythms fitted together effortlessly.



The rhaita concert

Brian Jones had found Jajouka through Brion Gysin in the 60s, at a time when everyone else was looking to India for mesmerizing trance rhythms. The repetitive sound-structures of The Master Musicians have so much in common with rock music (as *beat music plus melody riffs*) that it felt totally natural for me to play with them. There was no ego involved, and I felt able to play comfortably, without addressing the great divide between us — in culture, age, or sound.

At one point Bachir held up a large drum, skinned on one side like a tambourine, near the amp. Its chamber re-amplified the feedback from my guitar, causing the drum head to vibrate madly, creating a great low *thromb*ing sound. Even this insane amplified distortion didn't phase these wizened guys, cause them to freak out or condescend. They understand *sound*, and took it as such.

Before we ate, Bachir set up an improbably large pair of spkrs to play us some new record company remixes from the Brian Jones record, to which modern distorted gtr and heavy bass had been added. The record company is going to try and 'sell' the music to a new audience by trapping it in modern sound FX.

The men soon retired to dine in their sleeping chamber, leaving Bachir, Leah and I to eat alone on the porch. We ate a delicious meal of skewered lamb and vegetables, followed by more kif and more mint tea, as rain beat down on the dry land off the porch. The men had all commended Leah and I for being good luck in bringing the rain with us. Here, now, it is a blessing for their dry village.

During the meal I was stunned to hear the insane gtr sounds and infinity loops of my *East Jesus* CD, which I had given Bachir, blasting out over the village. It played until I could stand it no longer and asked him to turn it off. I could only wonder what the elders made of this strange dinner music, but it was kind of thrilling hearing it come crashing out at midnight under the cloudy skies of the Rif.

Dinner finished, over sweet hunks of melon dessert, the others filed back to their places on the porch, and out came the rhaitas, the oboe-like horns that can get loud as fuck. The real music was about to begin. Four horn players serenaded us into the very early morning with their most incredible delirious incantations.

The rhaita players work together in a round-like fashion against the drums, similar to Balinese music, where a complex phrase is divided between the various players, each holding down overlapping parts of the same phrase by breathing in sequence rather than simultaneously — the result being that the music never need pause to catch its breath. With no beginning or end it quickly ascends to a repetitive, ecstatic, trance state.

The musicians conjured this impressive model of the infinite before our eyes. No wonder Ornette Coleman clicked with these players (and the fathers of some of them) back in the 70s when he and Bob Palmer came here to record *Dancing In Your Head*. These guys are still out there in that same space Ornette was exploring with them back then. Across cultures and oceans.

I had my small mini-DAT running all night, as they alternated vocal chants and rhaita/drum meditations.

Slowly, personalities took shape Bachir, the young leader here, dark and intense, directing the musical flow as his father once did, cueing changes in pattern or section with a tip of his instrument. Younger brother Mustapha supports him as key drummer, holding down the shifting rhythms An older drummer in a dusty brown djellaba with black sailor's watchcap, his face fixed in a happy, constant, dim sort of grin, drumming his drum A round faced rhaita player, cheeks puffed up as he played

We decided that Laarbi, a rhaita player in his eighties and with no front teeth, was one of the two wizards of the group With his white-peaked djellaba, bare feet, and craggy crow's face, he seemed otherworldly beatific, benevolent, wizened He calmly kept up with the younger players

Tahir, who had traveled up from town with us, was the lead violin player of the group A dashing and handsome man in his middle age, he was not of the Attar family and did not normally live in Jajouka, but rather down in Ksar el Kebir His violin, played upright on the knee rather than under the chin, would define much of the melodic content of the music, riffing solos across the mesmeric patterns of the horns and drums He had played with Ornette, and possibly for Brian as well

The funniest was Berdouz, B2, previously biggest kif smoker in town before recently giving it up for good, and formerly a key member of the group, who played for Brian alongside Bachir's father, way back when Now a respected elder, I knew of him as a featured character in Steven Davis's book, *Joujouka Rolling Stone* He knew four phrases in English, and used them interchangeably for every situation His rap, no doubt glommed from hippy kids filing up here in the 70s, went "Thank you very much! Eberryting Outtasite! Berry Gut!" Bachir referred to him as the Charlie Chaplin of Jajouka He kept us laughing all night, and repeatedly refilled the sebsi for Leah and I He almost reminded me of old photographs of my father's father — uncannily so (Dark for a summer with much sun, I have been mistaken for Moroccan a few times already)

Before turning in, we bade goodbye to the old sharif (holy man) from a nearby village Once Bachir's father's best friend, he had lain on the floor all night, taking everything in, without saying two words It was 4am as he led his donkey out of the darkness and hopped on for the one-hour trek across the hills, but not before much laughter and flash pictures freezing his image there atop the unfazed mule We gave him 100 dirhams for a well-building project in his village, in return he promised to pray for our continued success Then the sharif was gone into the African night. The second of the night's two white-robed, graying wizards, I wondered if he would really appear in the photos we snapped, or if he was a fleeting apparition after all

Flashlights in hand, we walked a short path through low brush to our sleeping quarters Gazing upwards, I noted the rain clouds had lifted, opening up the vault above I had never seen this many stars so clearly in all my travels The Milky Way shone clear like some jewel-encrusted belt, Africa, north coast, far from the world

Leah and I were to sleep in Bachir's father's house, now padlocked and unused It was blue-washed, like so many other buildings here, and built on a square plan with an enclosed inner courtyard open to the sky A primitive palace of sorts, it was exquisite in design and simplicity We poked around a bit by the light of the gas lamp but soon fell asleep in a corner of one long blue room, dressed with tapestries, candles, and rugs for us, knowing there would be little sleep ahead if we wanted to make a quick survey of the village before departing to Ksar el Kabir to meet our driver If it had not been so late we might have puzzled over why they admonished us to lock the door behind us for the night.

We wake to a cloudy morning and Mustapha pounding on the steel doors to the place, our human alarm clock The house is even more beautiful by daylight, green plants growing in the courtyard offset against the tranquil blue At first I fail to recognize Laarbi, the wizard, who accompanies Mustapha In jeans and a short sleeved shirt, he is now the rural farming gentleman, his white djellaba hung on a peg somewhere

We breakfast back at the madrassah, eating figs, they tell us, from the same tree Mick Jagger ate from in 1989 when finally he followed Brian's footsteps to Jajouka after The Stones had recorded a song with the musicians in Tanger for the *Steel Wheels* album Ever the strategist, Jagger arrived with a film crew in tow, his journey to the village documented and used as publicity for The Stones' upcoming tour

All the musicians materialized to wish us off These people, who have so little to a Western eye, were among the most hospitable souls we'd ever met.

We walked down the rock-strewn path through the village, visiting the temple where their Saint, Sidi Hamid Sherq, was buried Here in the courtyard grew a large tree around which circled a great chain to which anyone deemed crazy or infirm would be chained for a few days, until they were 'cured' We passed the goat-god Bou Jeloud's cave high up in the hills, an opening in the rock from which the skin-clad God is said to prance forth during the most frantic revelry which accompanies certain extended yearly celebrations in Jajouka, bringing manhood to the young boys, fertility and prosperity to the village

We continued on past local village women and children, a well building project, and on down past the last white- and blue-washed buildings to the paved road, where the Benz was now parked and waiting

We raced to town, late to meet our driver, the situation with his picking us up in Kabir very uncertain to begin with The town was full of activity We waited, concerned, in a cafe by the main station with Bachir, Mustapha and Tahir We were just about to give up hope when Farouk, our driver, pulled his minivan into view Goodbyes were said, and we were off, leaving Jajouka behind us ☐ *There are a number of recordings available featuring both versions of The Master Musicians Some of the best are contained on* Joujouka Black Eyes *(Sub Rosa), which features the Hamri-led group, and the Bill Laswell-produced* Apocalypse Across The Sky *(Axiom/Island), which features the Bachir Attar group This article is adapted from Lee Ranaldo's* Moroccan Journal, *a work in progress A different version appears in the current issue of the American magazine* Yakuza *Thanks to Andrew Bowser for the edits*

Editor's note The Wire *became aware of the conflict which exists between the two versions of The Master Musicians in August 1995 when we ran an earlier article on the music of Joujouka (issue 138) which profiled the group led by Mohammed Hamri Much of the conflict, which at times has become extremely acrimonious, seemed to centre around the issue of who had the rights to rerelease and receive royalties from the Brian Jones recordings Whether this issue has been fully resolved is still unclear If anyone cares to cast any light on this unfortunate episode, then our Letters page is open*

PHOTOMONTAGE LEE RANALDO/LEAH SINGER

To celebrate our **150th issue**, we fire off an alternative sonic canon, an A-Z of some of the obscure objects of musical desire, past and present, that lie just behind *The Wire*

150

sonic essentials and aural obscurities

A Airto Carving out his identity from a forest of percussion trees at the beating heart of 7Ds electric fusion **Masami Akita** Merzbow's caustic music for Japanese bondage performance has us in stitches **Steve Albini** Hard-edge production guru **AMM** Bowing, scraping, tinkling and generally plucking music out of the air **Laurie Anderson** Mrs Lou Reed, our favourite tale spinnin' multimedia maven **Aphex Twin** Richard James keeps blinding us with DIY science We care because he doesn t **Arditti Quartet** Getting their strings round some of modern composition's knottiest, from Schoenberg to Xenakis Are you listening Kronos? **Autechre** Sean and Rob's razor-sharp sonic architecture is the jewel in Warp's crown **Albert & Donald Ayler** They had the right seal of God Almighty on their foreheads, and blasted New Orleans out into the heavens

B Derek Bailey Just when you thought Improv was dead in the water, Derek refloats his career with Jungle and Metal **Beastie Boys** Not just a buncha hooligans, the LA trio have proved they can *play* — and publish a mean 'zine in *Grand Royal* **Björk** Who else has appeared on *Top Of The Pops* and namechecked Stockhausen and Roland Kirk? **Blast First** Salute the UK label that discovered the US underground before America did **Boredoms** The louche rumble of Japanese DIY noise culture **Bow Gamelan Ensemble** Transmuting Industrial revolution debris into a full-on multimedia experience **Brötzmanns** Father Peter and son Caspar, separately (and together) machine-gunning Improv and rock history **Gavin Bryars** Brilliant bassist and composer who's collaborated with Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, Brian Eno, Tom Waits, Robert Wilson, Bill Frisell and more Open-mindedness never failed him yet **Tim Buckley** The free spirit who took West Coast folk rock starsailing into the astral jazz constellation **Harold Budd** The ex-GI who discovered free jazz with Albert Ayler and went on to make classic Ambient with Brian Eno and the Cocteau Twins Take our tip dispense with the dodgy poetry, old son

C abaret Voltaire Inspiring a generation of Techno auteurs with their Electro-headkicks **John Cage** Sshhh You know who **Can** Propelled by the great Holger Czukay/Jaki Liebezeit rhythm section, their monotonous mantric loops tuned into the zeitgeist 30 years too early **Captain Beefheart** Don Van Vliet, the man whose blues-inspired holler could blow a microphone at 20 paces **Don Cherry** In at the birth of harmolodics, he became the mercurial champion of

PHOTO OF LAURIE ANDERSON: KEVIN KNIGHT

Diamanda Galas

Autechre

Laurie Anderson

Carl Craig

Boredoms

Coldcut

Jon Hassell & Bluescreen

global fusion **Ornette Coleman** Four decades of all-systems-open **John & Alice Coltrane** The ultimate cosmic jazz union John's comet trail across the free jazz firmament caused premature burn-out, wife Alice gave us the amazing *Universal Consciousness* before creating her own church **Carl Craig** The "Psyche" EP and "Bug In The Bassbin" anticipating Intelligent Techno and breakbeat culture from 4000 miles distant **Chris Cutler** Heading up the ReR Corp conduit for pop dialectics, avant rock in opposition, Improv recalcitrance

D **Miles Davis** Unparalleled the legendary shapeshifter who invented modal jazz *and* mind-bending electric astro-Improv Need we say more? **Dead C** Cantankerous manifesto-writers of hermetic New Zealand noize **Destroy All Monsters** Formed by Ron Asheton out of the ashes of The Stooges, and influenced by Sun Ra and the Futurist noise manifestoes of Luigi Russolo, they gloried in drug-splattered amped-up chaos **Eric Dolphy** Saxophone genius and flute-acrobat whose compelling angularities caused another early self-destruction **DJ Spooky** That subliminal kid who's writing PoMo DJ culture into the Afro-futurist equation Intelligent Techno? This is it

E **CM** Manfred Eicher's label uniting the worlds of cool jazz, hot improvisation, World Music and Holy Minimalism Now, reissue Julian Priester's *Love, Love* and Bennie Maupin's *Jewel In The Lotus*, and we'll be happy **Brian Eno** Oblique strategist, international artist and sound fundraiser, now he's the Samuel Pepys of modern music **ESP** Lo-fi and out there the 60s independent label that launched hipsters Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler, Sunny Murray and more on an unsuspecting world **Einstürzende Neubauten** Blixa Bargeld, FM Einheit and a joblot of roadmending equipment created a new urban blues

F **4 Hero** Dego and Mark do it all Techno, drum 'n' bass, Electro-jazz with maximal style **The Fall** Or rather, Mark E Smith dusty chronicles of the Lancashire ghostlands **Morton Feldman** Sound was never suspended in such evanescent pools **Fender Rhodes** The funky sound of Herbie and Zawinul no other keyboard looks like it or lasts like it **Fourth World** Dream theories and virtual psychic spaces it's the psychedelia of the 21st century **Fred Frith** Unyoked from Henry Cow, this well-connected wanderer through the labyrinthine trackways of improvised music still finds time to abuse the guitar **Frippertronics** Acute angles and infinite loops from the UK's most obtuse guitarist

G **Diamanda Galas** From a whisper to a scream our fave Gothic Voice puts the 'stress' in songstress **Gamelan** Jegog or Kecak? Bali or Java? Copper or bamboo? **Charles Gayle** Coming up from the streets of New York, the cosmic howl of 90s free saxophone (see also David S Ware) **God** On your knees and pray to the mutant kings of bludgeon-noize **Heiner Goebbels** The German composer's *Hörstucke* radio plays are cross-platform shenanigans for *trompe l'oreille* effects, concrete poetry and organic sonorities **Barry Guy** Full throttle on the neck with the UK's foremost free-bass composer **Guy Called Gerald** The voodoo magician of breakbeat science

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I **mpulse!** The label that kept the eternal flame of fire music burning with John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Marion Brown and more

J **oujouka** Ancient Africa's prime groovers from the Rif Mountains Sort out your differences

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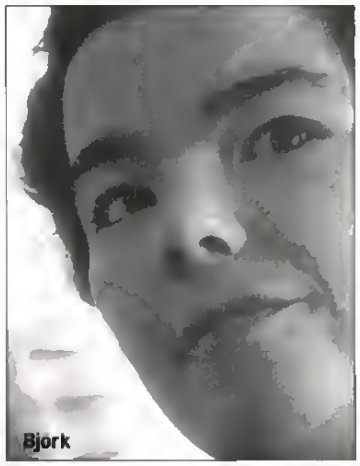
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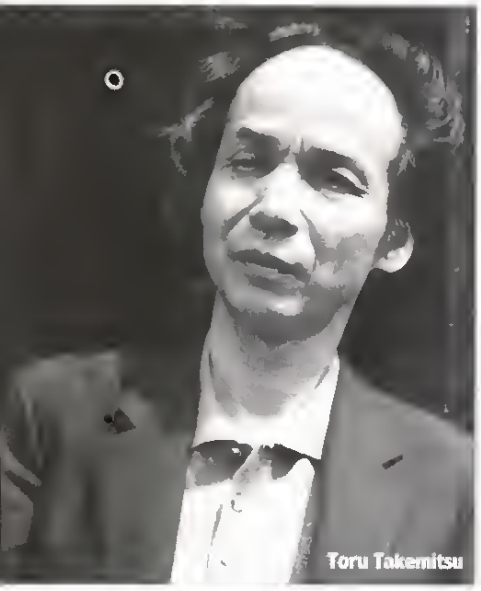
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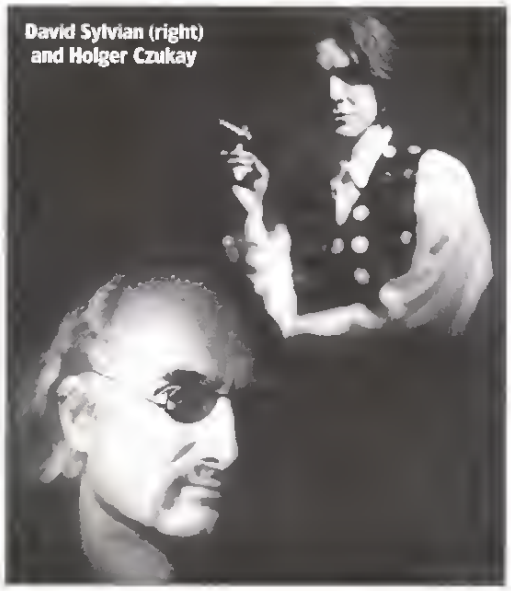
David Sylvian (right) and Holger Czukay

Hermeto Pasc

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Fela Kuti

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Peter Brötzmann

Bow Gamelan Ensemble

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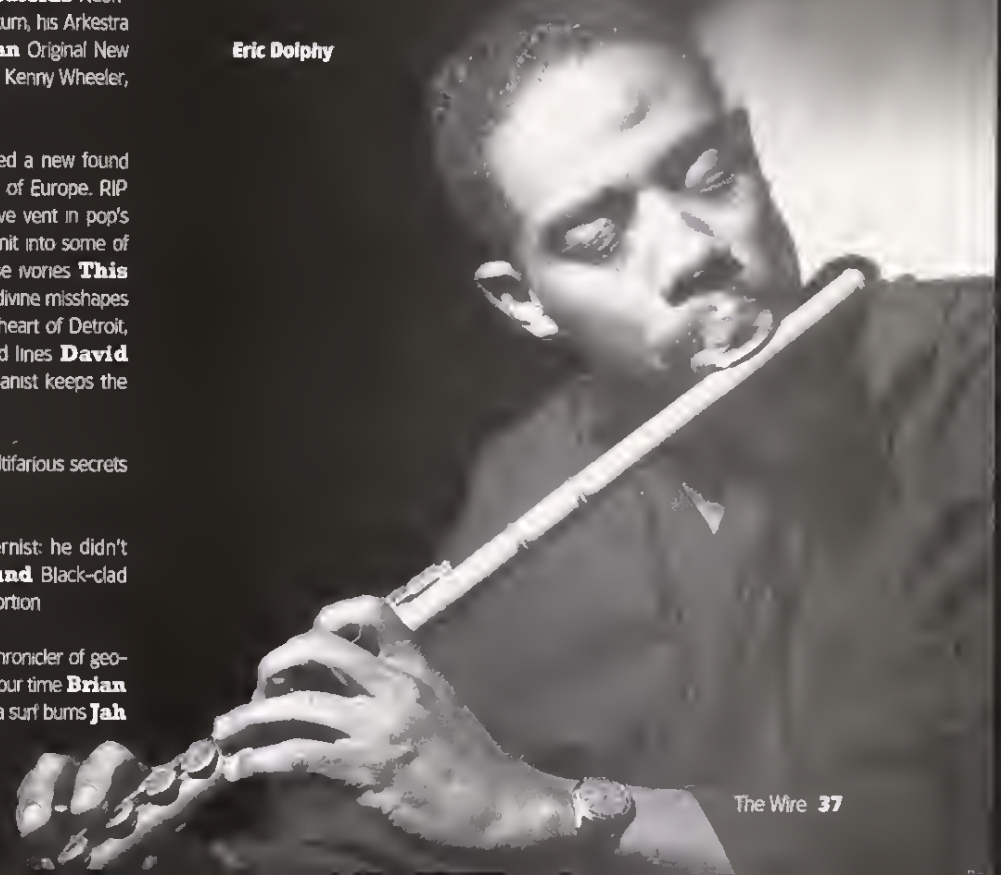
Otomo Yoshihide Japan's number one turntable terrorist **LaMonte Young** No frills, no noise pollution, no FX... just intonation **Young Gods** Superhuman speed-metal sucking up the earth's primal energies

Frank Zappa The modern composer refuses to die! **Hector Zazou** Peerless pop convenor with a good étude **John Zorn** Saxophone´skronk, and invisible architect of a global network of labels dispensing audio arcana □



Eric Dolphy

UK composer **James Dillon**'s taste for Jimi Hendrix, textural density and hallucinogenics makes him a bad boy of modern music. Interview by Ben Watson

James Dillon's orchestral music offers a radical immersion in sound. Paring away the clutter of expectations associated with classical music, the listener is plunged into a multi-hued flow that triggers emotional responses with alarming immediacy. Strong feelings are twisted into strange new shapes, as if the composer is meddling with the very sources of your hormonal mood-balance. According to Phil Lesh, bass player with The Grateful Dead and musical director of the Rex Foundation, Dillon's music is a gateway to non-Newtonian cyberspace, granting access "to those realms of existence recently available (in our culture) only to those courageous or crazy enough to ingest 'heroic' doses of restricted pharmaceuticals". Dillon laughs at the way Lesh's hippy vocabulary caused tremors of fear about his 'image' in the classical world. His strict materialism has little time for drugs as a passport to renewed perception.

However, Dillon's background may explain why his music has intense appeal for people whose sonic experience extends beyond Mozart. Self-taught as a composer, he spent the 60s pretty-much embroiled in the counter-culture, playing guitar and arguing with Maoists and squatters. He is highly critical of the classical tradition's use of electricity, citing Jimi Hendrix as the most successful deployer of electroacoustic space. What about music at school?

"We did have a very energised music teacher. He was crazy about Rachmaninov, but I had real problems connecting with that. It was a turn-off for me, classical music. Round about the age of 13, it was this soul, mod thing. Forming bands is about getting girlfriends and all the other shit, it has a fashion element. It's difficult to unravel the kind of dreamy quality of being a teenager. I discovered dope and then I took acid. Everything just goes haywire for two years, you know? All you can remember is the odd moment when you wake up in a sleeping bag somewhere and someone passes you a joint and your day's gone, months doing things like that, jam sessions. There was an incredible scene down in Plymouth, a strong jazz scene, too, John Surman and all those people. I literally just turned up with ten bob and a guitar on my back and I met somebody in the bus station. He asked me if I play guitar and I went and stayed in his place, ended up there for about 18 months. Things were like that."

mighty

Chancing on some records by Stravinsky was a revelation. "I realised that I knew nothing about music, I had to get away from everything, I had to get a break with this druggy existence. I was shook, but I was prone to be shook. I couldn't work out where the hell Stravinsky was coming from. Even though there's the Russian connection, I still couldn't connect it to Rachmaninov."

Fired by the famous Varese quote on Frank Zappa's *Freak Out!* — "The present-day composer refuses to die!" — Dillon checked out Varese's music. Exposure to the most extreme modernist of 20th century music prompted a change of lifestyle.

"I knew there had to be some kind of paradigm shift. I had a new girlfriend and we said, Let's go to London. London seemed like a good place to hide out. That's basically

when I began to study, initially just the history of music I'd learned to read music but actually not touched it for six, seven years"

Dillon signed on for a course in studio acoustics at the Polytechnic of North London He supported himself by working nights at a particle physics project at the Imperial College of Science This job was a favourite among the painters he knew Two canvases hang in the hallway of his flat, hard-edge abstractions that say a lot about the uncompromising absoluteness of his music His first musical contact was with the composer Chris Dench, the only other person he knew who was into Xenakis, and he began to see how the straight music world operated He wrote a piano piece for Michael Finnissy, a composer noted for his radical virtuosity as a player It became one of Dillon's first public performances A piece called *Once Upon A Time*, written for the same instrumentation as Varese's *Octandre*, was a sensation when played at the Purcell Room by The London Sinfonietta It got 15 reviews ("I don't think I've had so many reviews since," he comments mordantly) Chased by several publishing houses, he signed with Peters Edition, and thus became a 'composer' Not bad for a Catholic drop-out from Glasgow

"I discovered dope and then I took acid. Everything just goes haywire for two years, you know?"

Dillon is caustic about the way class and regional 'roots' have become a commodity in marketing composers and musicians He would rather talk about the nuts and bolts of assembling his music In constructing *East 11th Street*, a percussion piece, he timed how long it took for the sound of the largest tam-tam to decay This "transient" was then used as the central ordering principle of the piece He arrays sounds for the ear with the hi-tech precision of Anthony Caro welding one of his metal sculptures

This concern for materials has a social aspect, too An important early experience was a series of concerts Pierre Boulez conducted at the Roundhouse in the early 70s "At the start, the Roundhouse was squatted as a space for music, which gave it an edge — like the free concerts on Parliament Hill, there was always the notion that you might get busted That was until the Harvey Goldsmiths turned rock festivals into revenue-machines I think most of the time people encounter modern music in presentations which are completely inept Contemporary music has inherited the salon idea — there's been very little confrontation with that orthodoxy I don't want to get too religious, but if you go to a concert and it works, it is because the performer has somehow managed to enchant the space, to occupy the space and dissolve the surroundings, but that is extremely rare Most of the time, the surroundings are a blockage, everyone knows what to do There's very little difference between the South Bank and going to the supermarket or the bank, knowing which queue to stand in"

atom smasher

Dillon's scores have a reputation for formidable complexity, a heretical feature given the current vogue for minimalism "This problem of 'difficulty' is a very parochial, very British thing I have perhaps ten performances a year in Britain and 90 on the continent There are two ensembles that perform my music in Britain Arditti Quartet and Music Projects No one else will touch it."

He explains how in the orchestral piece *Helle Nacht*, his score demands concentration from every member of the orchestra He'll ask the fourteenth, second-desk violin to do some really taxing work.

"If the player hates it, doesn't want that kind of responsibility, what can I do? I'm willing to stand up in front of these hundred musicians and justify it when some jerk at the back of the orchestra — not necessarily the violinist, by the way — starts making comments I will explain that I don't want this guy sat there playing the same *arpeggios* for five minutes and reading a motoring magazine I want him to engage with the music on the same level as a soloist — it's idealistic

"One of the reasons the classical tradition has sustained itself is that every now and again it has been totally reappraised — Monteverdi, Beethoven — but it's always been done from within They go back to the fundamentals, the material, notions of order and disorder From within the tradition, not this self-conscious, postmodern creation of hybrids"

That said, he explains how, in the vast cycle *Nine Rivers*, his idea of time borrows as much from Hendrix as from Heraclitus "People are so indoctrinated with the necessity of pulse I like the idea of macro-pulse you don't have to keep stating pulse This idea actually came from Hendrix You can maintain the shape of something without having to have the scaffolding there all the time He has this inbuilt clock which allows him to ignore pulse, he breaks it all the time I think he got that from having to play with these soul bands, rhythm guitar, where if you don't do it right you get sacked It allowed him to bend and shape the song form — rubato, stealing time — but also opening up electroacoustic spaces, the use of the cry-baby wah-wah pedal"

Negotiation of musical forms that encode genuine social forces is not easy the transmutation of materials can take decades Just as 20s Varese was crucial to 60s Zappa, Hendrix is crucial to Dillon today, allowing him to suspend timbral transformation in a flux that is both graphically instant and seductively linear

"You can almost hear the academic school of composition composing at the piano," Dillon concludes "I'm coming from the acoustic level, trying to deal with the sex of sound itself, what goes on when you put two timbres next to each other, the proximity of conjugal energies I'm not doing the same thing as Michael Nyman" — *Dillon's Oceanos is performed this month at the London Proms See Soundings for details*

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on — with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of. . .

Barry Adamson Tested by Mike Barnes

Barry Adamson first came to prominence in 1977 as the bass guitarist with Magazine one of the pivotal groups in Manchester's post-punk era The group split in 1981 after releasing five albums That year, Adamson contributed to The Birthday Party's *Junkyard* LP After a best-forgotten liaison with Steve Strange in Visage, he became a founder member of The Bad Seeds alongside Nick Cave, Blixa Bargeld and Mick Harvey Feeling restricted by the rock group format and wanting to explore his multi-instrumental talents, Adamson split from the group in 1987, embarking on a solo career He released his first solo single a reworking of Elmer Bernstein's "The Man With The Golden Arm", in 1988, followed by a series of EPs His solo albums for Mute Records, *Moss Side Story* (1989), *Soul Murder* (1992) and the new *Oedipus Schmoedipus* (which features contributions from Cave and Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, among others), were all conceived as soundtracks to imaginary films Adamson is also a bona fide soundtrack composer writing music for a number of films including Carl Colpaert's *Delusion*, Allison Anders's *Gas, Food, Lodging* and David Lynch's *Lost Highway*, to be released later this year The jukebox took place in London

A CERTAIN RATIO

"The Fox" (Factory 12")

OK, this is A Certain Ratio The title escapes me It's very early I think it's from 1980

It's "The Fox" from 1980.

[After conspicuous bass bum note] I always remember that bit, thinking how great it was

[As the track ends] I find the ideas really exciting I think at the time they would have been seen to be executed in a really great way as well I think I was affected most by the first A Certain Ratio, where there was just the four of them strumming guitars and basses before drummer Donald Johnson joined It was beautiful, it just ached The lyrics were just so morose and down, but exactly right for the music and these noise effects from the guitars I wish I could be more detailed about the memories of that, but I used to really like seeing them, hearing them play

It was strange because they were almost beautifully untogether, and he [Johnson] was as tight as anything He was doing incredible things When I saw a later version — when they were tight together, all of them, and [Johnson] was playing samples and stuff — it was pretty amazing

Although this was recorded 16 years ago, it doesn't seem to have dated. Perhaps it was somehow out of time when it was recorded?

I thought at the time, 'That's pretty way out.' After the punk thing, dance music was commercial-minded man's saviour, the polar opposite to punk But to the commercial man it's still pretty way out to have a guy who can only play three notes on the trumpet and then play effects The instrumental ghettoisation is about 'you have to be beautifully skilled on this instrument' But here they were with a punk approach 'I'll just blow this trumpet and put it through all these effects because it *sounds* wicked anyway' That is ahead-thinking because it's also a place where the commercial-minded man would not go

The trumpet sounds like it's trying to mimic the sounds Miles Davis got on *Bitches Brew*.

I'm going to do it next week. I tell you, next week I'll have my trumpet out and effects boxes! When *you* put it on I first thought it was live Miles Davis, I expected to hear John McLaughlin coming in Then I realised it was closer to home, and everything was phased as well

HENRY MANCINI

Extract from "Background To Murder" from *A Touch Of Evil: OST* (Varese Sarabande)

I recorded an extract from halfway into the piece to make it more difficult.

I know this OK, Henry Mancini, *A Touch Of Evil* [Whistles along] Genius

This Mexican style of music seems to have been used in the film to make your average Middle American viewer feel more threatened and stranded than if ethnically-ambiguous music was used to build the tension.

Yeah What's going on with that border area? Why is Charlton Heston Mexican? [Laughs] Orson Welles was very clear with his direction of the music in this film This is one of Mancini's moments, but he was a bit bemused why Welles got him to compose what was called 'Music of the Day' [Welles] said, 'I want you to compose music of the day and I'm going to have it on the radio' There's a lot of rock 'n' roll music in the film That was the music of the day that Mancini was instructed to compose so they could put it out of bars, cafes, out of the radio And it works great just being quiet and coming out of the bar rooms, so we stay with the action really up front

There's not much main score the opening theme with the long shot, the murder scene and perhaps some other moments I think Welles was actually a bit concerned that Mancini made things too grand, because he wanted it to be as mysterious as possible Is this off the soundtrack CD? It's a beautiful combination of setting the scene, describing where we are in the world, a border town with the influence of the percussion and the mystery and the excitement of [Sings motif] Beautiful

What are the differences between writing actual and imaginary soundtracks?

I guess it's about direction With my own stuff I'll go, 'OK, this is the scene, this is what it's all about, this is what I'm trying to say, this is what I'm trying to convey' With *Touch Of Evil*, they might bring Mancini in at the end of the picture, or he might see the script [Welles] might say, 'I'm doing a picture I want you to work and think 'Border town', 'Danger' ' And he might go away and just hear this rhythm That's very much the way I approach my own things So in *Moss Side Story* I'm thinking, 'What's in the air? How can I set this up?' The opening track on *Moss Side Story* is trying to provide a scene which is dangerous — the psychological manner of it is slightly out-of-kilter

For *Gas, Food, Lodging*, Allison [Anders] might say, 'OK, the character in this scene is carefree, flighty and has a certain thing about them' She might want me to underscore the tone of that — to give it that lightness All of it is to stir something in here [points to torso], all the way across the board from my stuff to that stuff [Mancini/Welles] to *Gas, Food, Lodging* It's the same approach but different direction

I've just done some work with David Lynch [on *Lost Highway*] and he was very clear about what he wanted from the emotion of the scene, so he'd direct me in certain ways Once I got in the ballpark, he'd say, 'Now I want you to go in a little further Look at the eyes there What are they saying, even though they're talking about this?' Then you start to underpin the emotions so it becomes three-dimensional

When I first went to see Lynch's *Eraserhead* in my teens, I found Alan Splet's sound design extremely draining.

Incredible, incredible This new film is as draining, I tell you I left the screening of it so worried [Laughs] One scene is not too far from that ["Background To Murder"] in terms of the orchestration, lots of bass trombones and stuff, then it goes into other areas that are pure horror-*noir* It's scary I couldn't listen to this music for very long because things would start happening to me I'd go home and people would start ringing the door bell at two in the morning and I'd think, 'That's never happened to me What's going on?'

THE BEACH BOYS

"Here Today (backing track)" (Sub Pop 7")

[Immediately] The Beach Boys [At end of track] I've no idea what it's about other than it's The Beach Boys

It's a recently released outtake, just the backing track, of "Here Today" from the *Pet Sounds* sessions.

I like all the brass work It's almost like the "Good Vibrations" sound with the organ and the plucked bass and the out-of-tune piano Interesting one — sound innovators, the search for someting new

"Good Vibrations" was the first record I ever bought I bought it for my sister's birthday and then kept it [Laughs] I was totally taken by the possibility of sound I couldn't identify what was doing what, so it all seemed futuristic and weird And at the same time I recognised certain things like church organs and bass and I guess the vocal harmonies I knew The Beach Boys in terms of "Fun Fun Fun" and all that sort of stuff I didn't know of course that there was such a thing as a psychedelic period going on where people were trying to expand their minds, and Brian Wilson was trying to find something not unlike Phil Spector

For me "Good Vibrations" spoke volumes on the possibility of what happens with sound I'm thinking particularly of when I was in Magazine for some reason, there was a little bit of reference to that in terms of trying to do things with sound, and going back to A Certain Ratio, putting things through effects

Funnily enough, I was working on a piece the other week and I used that sound of the bass being plucked very close to the bridge, tight There's a mystery about it As well as underpinning the sound, the melody makes it percussive It works very much as a guitar A fascinating sound with the trombones as well, which are almost like lead instruments, and it's quite a dark instrument to use on something that seems quite light And I love the use of 20 tambourines or whatever it is

MASSIVE ATTACK VS THE MAD PROFESSOR

"Eternal Feedback" from *No Protection* (Circa)

[Immediately] Massive Attack. Mad Professor remix Beautiful I think this is the quintessential modern day record I think that all records should sound like this [Laughs] I think everybody should have a Mad Professor remix It should come with each record I can understand it from the technical point of what's going on, therefore some of the mystery is taken away When I don't allow myself to get involved in that, and just listen to it as a work of art, I think it's incredible It's an inspired move on both sides to do the record like this It's what we all want — I think that's the key as well

[In the late 70s] when we were all thinking about punk rock, we would go home and put on Prince Far I at the same time We were talking about the commercial man's dance music, the other side of it was a sort of attitude that was found in dub — repetitive rhythms and doing things like A Certain Ratio, with effects and all the rest of it It's amazing to me how very quietly this music is being acknowledged every now and again I feel like it's a real 'hats off' to this tradition

A lot of people are doing dub remixes using different methods, but still in that spirit of dub.

It's about a feeling and about being able to be very spiritually connected We can go really far with this I remember watching Adnan Sherwood work and he was talking to me about not really getting into anything until the track is breathing And if we take the Latin meaning of 'spiritual', spirit means breath and life So if the life is breathing in the music I can hear how all these effects are set up, but there's something very connected spiritually to a breathing sensation, and a life thing, and things are moving randomly, just happening it's almost like it's mixing itself, it's like the outside things, the spirit, the breath of life, are helping it along I can really feel it with this

ISAAC HAYES

"Joy" from *Joy* (Stax)

I don't know who this is but I'm trying to see if I can work it out from the phrasing of the horns and stuff I'm homing in on Isaac Hayes for some reason [Starts singing along when vocals come in] Yeah, of course

It's from *Joy*, released in 1973.

I was pinning down some of those horn phrases and the way he uses those alto flutes at the top end, which is very traditional, but it's also a filmic orchestration again to give this visual power He's talking about joy but he has tremolo strings which is a mysterious thing and quite dark, disturbing It's moving the skin around so he's trying to get to this emotion There's some mystery with it about this woman he's maybe talking about So he's creating quite a picture within the orchestration, I feel It's beautiful I actually know this track I'll have to buy it now

What do you think about his movie music, specifically *Shaft*?

Mindblower Why? Because it's a pop song but it's able to touch people on such a broad level It's got really amazing hooks Every time we think of wah-wah guitar, for some reason everyone goes, "Shaft", because of the way it was used But the orchestration is incredible All the teachings of orchestration in the world won't suggest to you what colour you should use for a certain thing I think his choice of instruments to orchestrate those passages really go 'boom' like that, and then we're open to all this cool stuff

I've got *Shaft*, the double album, and I was really affected by the way he was able to suggest what was going on in the same way as Mancini, through the use of contemporary orchestration, but giving it something of the time, *and* saying these characters are black I think he's just a brilliant musician, a real genius My fantasy is that the guitar part wasn't written Maybe they had this funky thing working with the strings and maybe the guitar player had a wah-wah in his case and said, 'Let's try it'

HECTOR ZAZOU

"The Lighthouse" from *Songs From The Cold Seas* (Columbia)

It's Siouxsie And The Banshees Or with Budgie

It's Siouxsie on vocals, but the music's by someone else.

It's with somebody German, maybe?

He's French Algerian, actually.

These are getting harder [Laughs] OK, fill me in, what's the deal?

It's Hector Zazou, *Songs From the Cold Seas*. There are all sorts of people on this track. Mark Isham's on trumpet and there's a shaman chanting in the background. Zazou started the project by collecting field recordings and source material from places like Greenland, Finland, Iceland, the Orkneys.

[Looks at CD] I didn't know of this record at all It's good He obviously dreams this material, therefore opens it out to call in these other people who put it together in his own visual way Just lately I've been drawn in a little bit with the whole Icelandic thing, particularly with film makers and how they do it over there I'm reading a book at the moment that's set there and it's a world that's not been contemplated so much There are pages of descriptions of the different kinds of snow and the textures and the depths of the ice

Zazou is a composer who orchestrates singers and musicians as much as anything else, bringing in different people on each track, which is something you do on *Oedipus Schmoedipus*. How do you select which musicians to use?

A lot of the time the music tells you who you need and what you need And if you've met this person before it goes into the subconscious while this music is being created and that's like the finished picture in a way I think it's possibly what's going on here In my own experience, the thing is there aleady and you have to find what it is that's needed there — if it's a certain voice, I hear it in the same way that you might hear a horn line or a trumpet line

There is a dreamlike element to this music for me, and I think the dream element is about putting together worlds to create a world that wouldn't necessarily be there

ROXY MUSIC

"The Numberer" (Island 7")

Roxy Music Funky! It's called "The something"

"The Numberer".

That's the one It was the B-side to "Editions Of You" No, "Virginia Plain" I went from the beginning up to *Country Life* The first album just blew me way I come back to Magazine in some ways experiments with sounds around a song and the individual interpretations by members of the group [guitarist] Phil Manzanera, [saxophonist] Andy Mackay and of course Eno with the electronics, the synth fall-out. And the drummer [Paul Thompson] was fantastic, Johnny Gustafson's bass, always amazing

Actually, the bass on the Roxy Music records was one of the things that drew me into bass They had different players but it was always an approach that anchored the section and played around with melody as well

Magazine were often compared to Roxy Music.

I think Roxy Music did provide a background of early teenage experience, just this mystery, this idea of a life that was being lived in a way, working class Manchester life, and hearing this music there was almost a punk element to it

The thing I really liked about it was the songwriting depth, "In Every Dream Home A Heartache" "For Your Pleasure", and the way they set up moods that didn't rely on any convention Bryan Ferry comments on this world that's removed from the world that he was familiar with in the beginning but always aspired to and then reports on the delusion of that world And then some of the great things of that world too, where you can do The Strand and go to this place because we're rich and beautiful I love the risks that are taken in these early tracks That goes back to other things we've been talking about with A Certain Ratio and The Beach Boys — those elements of finding something that's slightly off, but it's haunting and it gets you

SQUAREPUSHER

"Bubble" from "Bubble And Squeak" EP (Worm Interface)

It's so weird, that programmed drumming [Fretless bassline comes in] Wow Weather Report meet drum 'n' bass I love that sound, though, I've got to be honest, that snare I was never much on fretless bass actually [Tails off, distracted by the music]

This is Squarepusher, Tom Jenkinson. He programs and plays bass as well — with an obvious jazz rock influence.

Nice Star record I love drum 'n' bass programs It's beyond what the human mind is capable of working out When I first heard drum 'n' bass it seemed a natural machine-drum progression into what we would call jazz. If you think about jazz drumming, like when a jazz drummer takes a solo, I think there are similar elements One day, just to confirm this in my mind, I took a drum 'n' bass rhythm and put it under a straightforward jazz piece and it fitted If you imagine that written out for a really great jazz drummer, he could play it with a snare and cymbals, apart from there being an underlying consistent beat, it really is like a jazz drummer workout — I think of solos I've heard by Elvin Jones I don't think the worlds are that far apart, and therefore it's no coincidence that Squarepusher would play his later jazz-style bass and have that jazz connection going on somewhere

Was your bass playing ever influenced by jazz or jazz rock?

I had a similar sound in some ways, but I didn't play fretless very much I didn't like fusion, I didn't like the guitar I don't know why It made sense to me later when I heard people like The Lounge Lizards, when it became more of a punk thing, and some aspects of Lydia Lunch, *Queen Of Siam*, which was basically a jazz ensemble big band with electric guitar I liked Sly And The Family Stone Larry Graham using the bass to underpin the rhythm, the odd melody, walking up the top and expressing the instrument in that way

HERBIE HANCOCK

"The Naked Camera" from *Blow-Up: OST* (Premier Soundtracks)

Herbie Hancock *Blow Up* I actually enjoy this as a jazz piece but it doesn't really make me think of *Blow-Up* to be honest with you I think it's the kind of jazz that wouldn't necessarily exist in a film The opening track and The Yardbirds and some of the other pieces do, but that track is beautiful as a piece of jazz music, and Herbie Hancock is a genius composer There's a great mood to it, I think it's really clever It's almost more jazz than film, if you get my meaning That [bass] refrain has a platform to put a visual image on the top of, but I think it's a fine-line one I would listen to that one outside of the film

What prompted your interest in soundtrack music?

I think it's where I first really discovered the emotional value of music My sister was playing a lot of rock music in the 60s I liked it, but then going to see a movie and hearing music as well and seeing what was going on and feeling the music move me left a real thing that I chose to stick with in some way It kept resurfacing as well through punk rock and jazz But then there would be this root that always led back to film

The modern soundtrack is whatever fits Who would have thought that Al Green's "Let's Stay Together", which we all kind of visualise in our own ways in whatever romance we've had in our lives, is now stuck to a film and it becomes, 'Oh, that track from *Pulp Fiction*'

Pulp Fiction sold shitloads And there was a time at the beginning of my career when I might have gone, 'Oh no, it's the death of the composer when you start putting those songs together' But it's getting people into seats and also making them open to the modern day soundtrack Which is what I try to do with *Oedipus Schmoedipus*, almost make it like the modern day soundtrack, not have orchestral themes, but a series of pieces, like *Oedipus The Album* There's that Jarvis Cocker song, that Nick Cave song, there's a Miles Davis piece on the same record how come? Because that's the soundtrack, the modern day Oedipus soundtrack, as I see it

Does knowing that a piece of music is linked to a film alter the way that a person listens to it?

I think it really does, because the mind is then open to the idea of visual interpretation And I think that we're very sophisticated these days at visual interpretation We know what sad music is, we know what happy music is, we know what mystery music is It sets a mood, that's the license that it gives the listener

What's your favourite soundtrack?

Well, this month I'd say it has to be Quincy Jones, *In Cold Blood* I think that has to be a slice of genius and a half

meat beat manifesto

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CD1

1	Material	Praying Mantra	17.05
2	Killing Joke	Democracy *The Russian Tundra Mix*	17.52
3	Keiichi Suzuki	Satellite Serenade *Trans Asian Express Mix*	13.10
4	Zodiac Youth	Fast Forward The Future *Bucket And Bang Mix*	7.18
5	Primal Scream	Higher Than The Sun *Higher Than The Kite Mix*	8.46
6	Ready Made	Ambient State	0.49
7	Wir	So And Slow It Grows *The Orb In Atlas Mix*	6.57
8	Yasuaki Shimizu	Secret Squirrel	7.47
Total playing time			**77.52**

CD2

1	Yello	You Gotta Say Yes To Another Excess *Orb Extended Remix*	12.58
2	Innersphere	Out Of Body *Lagical Mix*	4.25
3	Depeche Mode	Happiest Girl *Orbital Mix*	7.38
4	Erasure	Ship Of Fools *Orbital Southsea Isles Of Holy Beats Mix*	8.52
5	Sun Electric	O'Locco *Orbital Therapy Part 1*	6.05
6	Maurizio	Ploy *Battersea Was An Island Of Mud Mix*	12.38
7	Time Unlimited	Men Of Wadodem *Orbital Mix*	4.20
8	Paradise X	2 Much *Start And Depart From Paradise Mix*	6.35
9	Pop Will Eat Itself	Home *Home Sweet Home Orb Remix*	11.13
10	Love Kittens	What Goes On *Orbient Mix 2*	5.15
Total playing time			**78.23**

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Playlists from the outer limits of planet sound

Rough Trade 15

Various — Uncharted Territory: OST (Penny Black)
Ganger — The Cat's In The Bag, The Bag's In The Water (Planet)
Richie Hawtin — Concept #5 (Plus B)
Source Direct — MET 22 (Metalheadz)
Jean Schwartz — Quatre Vingts (INA GRM)
Various — Altered Beats (Axiom)
Farmer's Manual — No Backup (Mego)
Busta Rhymes — Woo Hah (Drigin Unknown Mix) (Elektra)
Alex Gopher — Est-ce Une Gopher Party Baby? (Solid)
Scanner — DAT Conversions (Soul Static Sound)
Melting Pot — Something Is Wrong (10 Denk)
Carl Craig — Bug In The Bassbin (Mo' Wax)
Gastr Del Sol — Upgrade And Afterlife (Drag City)
Up Bustle & Out — Revolutionary Woman (Oestro Gwen Mix) (Ninja Tune)
Trace & Ed Rush — Mad Different Method (Nu Black)
Compiled by Darryl Moore, Rough Trade shop, Neal's Yard, Covent Garden, London

Age Of Aquarius 15

Olivia Tremor Control — Dusk At Cubist Castle (Flydaddy)
Burzum — Filosofem (Misanthropy)
Koji Asano — Gravity (RAB)
Nels Cline — Chest (Little Brother)
DJ Zinc — So Damn Fresh (Remix) (Ganja)
Spaceheads — Open My Box (Dark Beloved Cloud)
OAD — Daytona (FMN)
Moebius/Plank/Neumeier — Zero Set (Sky/Gyroscope)
Plug — Plug 1 & 2 (Blue Angel)
Squarepusher — Feed Me Weird Things (Rephlex)
Omoide Hatoba — Kinsei (Birdman)
Dieselhed — Tales Of A Brown Dragon (Amanlio)
Neutral Milk Hotel — On Avery Island (Merge)
Scud Mountain Boys — Massachusetts (Sub Pop)
Tortoise — DJed (Thrill Jockey 12") (Spinning at 45, not 33)
Compiled by Windy Chien, Aquarius Records & Mail Order, San Francisco, California. e-mail: tubesax@sirius.com

New Jersey Ether 15

David Shea — Tower Of Mirrors (Sub Rosa)
Stereolab — Emperor Tomato Ketchup (Elektra)
Run On — Start Packing (Matador)
Various — Dead Man Walking DST (Columbia)
Moebius & Plank — Rastakraut Pasta (Gyroscope)
ZGA — Sub Luna Mirror (ReR)
Curtis Mayfield — The Curtis Mayfield Story (Rhino)
Autechre — Tri Repetae (TVT)
Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan & Michael Brook — Night Song (Real World)
The Ex — Mudbird Shivers (Crosstalk)
Spacemen 3 — Sound Of Confusion (Taang)
Francoise Hardy — La Question (Virgin France)
Sweet & Honey — Live At Your Cosmic Mind (Now Sound)
Doldrums — Doldrums (VHF)
Pharoah Sanders — Message From Home (Verve)
Selected from the Heavy Airplay list, WFMU Radio, New Jersey

Ultimate Radio Exotica 10

Type 1 Solar Emissions Plasma bursts 0.1 > 1GHz
Type 2 Solar Emissions Gamma-ray slow drift noise storms/the 'seashore effect' 5 > 200MHz
Type 3 Solar Emissions Fast drift electron bursts 30KHz > 1GHz
Type 4 Solar Emissions Synchotron emissions 0.5 > 50GHz
Hydrogen Line SETI (Search For Extraterrestrial Intelligence) 1.42GHz
ICBM Exhaust Trails (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile) 12KHz
Abyssal Spherics McCallie Corp/ Deep Sea Electrical Explorer 60Hz > 500KHz
Microwave Background 3K red-shifted black body radiation, the 'echo' from the Big Bang 300GHz
Noise Storms From Jupiter — 18-24MHz, peak @ 21 MHz
Meteor Reflections 1-10KHz
Compiled by Disinformation

The Office Ambience

The Fall — The Light User Syndrome (Jet)
William Parker — Compassion (Homestead)
James Plotkin — The Joy Of Disease (Avant)
Various — Unknown Deutschland (Virgin)
Marion Brown — Afternoon Of A Georgia Faun (ECM)
Sheila Chandra — ABoneCroneDrone (Real World)
Einstürzende Neubauten — Ende Neu (Mute)
Rancho Relaxo All Stars — Higiene Metal (Disko B)
Gastr Del Sol — Upgrade And Afterlife (Drag City)
Various — Le Jazz Non (Corpus Hermeticum)
Barry Adamson — Oedipus Schmoedipus (Mute)
Mike & Rich — Expert Knob Twiddlers (Rephlex)
Somma — Hooked Light Rays (Low)
Analogue — AAD (Sonic Bubblegum)
Various — Altered Beats (Axiom)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

Sheila Chandra

sound check

Under the thumb: August's selected CDs, albums and 12"s

In this month's review section:

Barry Adamson • Air • *Altered Beats* • Django Bates • Beck Black Stage • *Century XXI UK* Sheila Chandra • Current 93 Drumhead • Henri Dutilleux Alec Empire • The Fall • Faust Final • Castr Del Sol • Ciuffre/ Bley/Swallow • Graham Central Station • James Hardway • High Rise • Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan • King Crimson • Kronos Quartet Fela Kuti • Magma • Mainliner Microstoria • Mike & Rich *Musique's Action 2* • Nicolette NRC Ensemble • Seigen Ono The Orb • Outland • Pablo's Eye • Charlemagne Palestine Parker/Cuy/Lytton • Jeremy Peyton Jones • Rancho Relaxo All-Stars • Rapoon • Sand Sandoz • Oumou Sangare Bim Sherman • Jake Slazenger • Cary Smith & John Stevens • Somma Spleen • Spontaneous Music Ensemble • Spring Heel Jack Vernon Reid • Squarepusher Tactile • David Torn • King Tubby & Prince Jammy Twilight Circus • Two Lone Swordsmen • *Unknown Deutschland* • *Unknown Public* Vasara • Chris Watson • Wire *WrK Compilation* • Joe Zawinul ***plus* critical beats, Electronica and out rock releases in brief**

Beck
O-De-Lay
GEFFEN GEO 24926 CD MC

My problem with Beck runs something like this "I've got my VW, I've got my bleached hair and saggy pants, I've got my surf and skateboards, and now with the purchase of my Beck album I've completed the youth-in-the-90s self-assembly kit" *O-De-Lay* touches the chakras of youth culture 96-era so precisely it hurts, entwining rounds of HipHop, skate thrash, an Asian mysticism which just reeks of incense and tie-dyed wall mounts, stoner blues, Electro funk, Arthur Lee's acid rock and Brian Wilson's sugar pop Only dub is notable by its absence

This album is tailor-made for those sections of the community who have only had Beastie Boys albums to live off for the last ten years But those anonymous ranks of young, predominantly white headz, beatniks and other 'alt' personalities are not bad constituencies to cater to in terms of their predilection for musical ruffness, lame-brained humour and off-the-cuff eclecticism On those grounds *O-De-Lay* delivers the goods, the only question being will this album be bought because it's so wildly broad or because it offers the hand of cultural rehabilitation to such shunned forms as bluegrass, Country music and 50s pop? *O-De-Lay* offers visions of Beck both as a liberal musical alchemist and a deeply conservative traditionalist flirting with weird forms in his formative years The questions 'Which one is he?' and 'Where does he fit in?' are perhaps the flashpoints from which *O-De-Lay* derives its tension For the moment, Beck is a 23 year old geek in an age when geek is good

JAKE BARNES

Current 93
All The Pretty Little Horses
OURIRO 030 CD/LP

The music of Current 93 is remarkable for its curious admixture of seemingly irreconcilable elements traditional folk music collides with plaintive strings, dronescapes and massed choirs Such a baroque assemblage might prove irksome to certain listeners, to others this is the key to Current 93's enduring appeal

This release, arguably the most accomplished Current 93 project yet, gathers an intriguing array of wild and wonderful talents around core member David Tibet there are contributions from long-standing collaborators John Balance of Coil and Steven Stapleton of Nurse With Wound Perhaps slightly more surprising is the presence of Nick Cave on the disc, giving one of his finest vocal performances on one of the two versions of the title track (the other version features an equally poignant vocal from Tibet himself) The minimal backing provided by Michael Cashmore's hauntingly exquisite guitar forms the perfect accompaniment for Cave's heartfelt rendition of a traditional lullaby

Although the inclusion of Cave might entice those unfamiliar with Current 93 to sit up and take notice, it is Tibet's potent lyrical imagery and the marshalling of the musicians at his disposal which are responsible for the cogency of this record The antithetical concepts of the "Inmost Light" and the "Inmost Night", derived from Aleister Crowley and Arthur Machen, provide the key features on this recording, a medium of Tibet's bitter-sweet voice A work of devastating beauty

JOHN EVERALL

Drumhead Meets The Ninja Shark
Dangerous Dub Part II
COPASETIC COP 004 CD/LP

Twilight Circus
Other Worlds Of Dub
M RECORDS 127 CD

Dub's flying hi-hats and its technique of sending a snare drum ricocheting through the echo chamber more chapters in the etymology of 90s breakbeat culture There are moments on *Dangerous Dub Part II* when you expect the reverberating snares to accelerate into the drum 'n' bass headrush They never do, because Richie Stevens, aka Drumhead, still dreams of dub's halcyon days, recreating the atmosphere of casual, hands-on virtuosity, studio experimentation and sonic sorcery that hung over a Channel One 7" B-side circa 1975 like — you guessed it — a pall of dope smoke No sense of future-shock here, then, just a series of brilliantly inventive dubs in which 'Run Run", where Stevens directs immersive bass and cymbal-woosh through a riveting FX-drama, is the money-track

The music on *Dangerous Dub* might sound archaic, albeit far more compelling, next to the kind of digitised versions featured on other recent dub releases such as Iration Steppas Meet D Rootical's *Original Dub DAT* or The Disciples' *Hail HIM In Dub*, but they aren't so utterly and painstakingly retro as Ryan Moore's utterly brilliant (and utterly obscure) 1995 release *Twilight Circus In Dub Part One* Moore's second release, *Other Worlds Of Dub*, shifts the location from a Spanish Town dancehall to a neon-lit cloudforest moored off the coast of

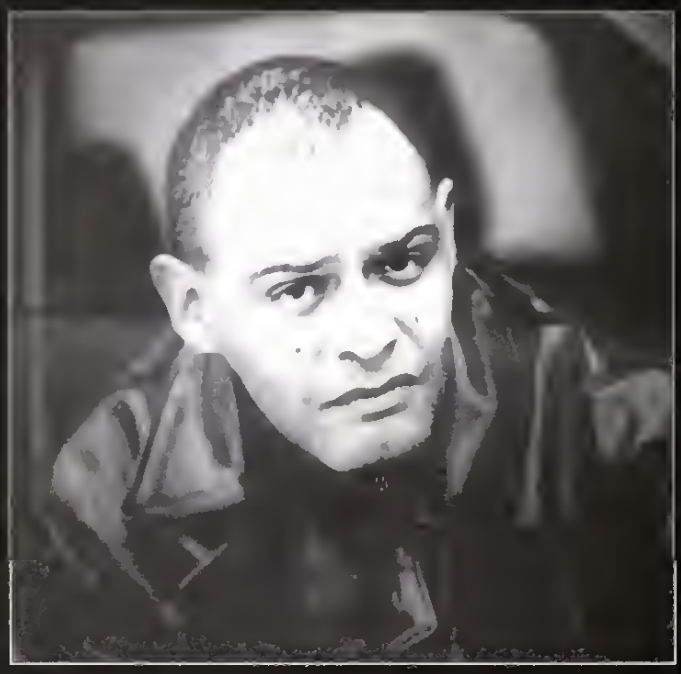
Barry Adamson
Oedipus Schmoedipus
MUTE CD STUMM 134 CD

Without John Barry, 007 wold be an unfeasibly smug playboy prick without an iota of cool, without Bernard Herrmann, Travis Bickle would have been less God's Lonely Man and more a pathetic, asocial jerk. The soundtrick (*sic*) is where everyday personae are bled into the eternal archetypes of the night. Equally, soundtrack music often speaks of a yawning *lack* which the movie itself is frightened to admit: everything the world-weary but snappy protagonist will never put into words, will never allow into his thoughts or his life.

Abyssal shifts of mood, into melancholy, death, loss, are conjured up in the sculpted air of the soundtrack. Barry Adamson knows this and deploys it accordingly. Across his now long and exemplary career in (bad) mood music, he has been The Man With The Golden Arm, a Moss Side yardie and a Walter Mosleyesque PI. (There's one mark I'll never be able to shake off, he seems to be saying: the Negro Inside Me.) His latest sortee (title of the year, already?) has the usual quotient of *noir* and neo-porn nods — "The Big Bamboozle", "Vermillion Kisses", "Achieved In The Valley Of The Dolls", "Dirty Barry" — and yet I sometimes think it's too easy to call what he does a soundtrack in search of a screen. Adamson's music is a soundtrack, but ultimately it's for the strange movies he screens in his own head, shards of a bigger plot we'll never see. For where are the films that would deserve such a steely, sinuous, savvy soundtrack? You'd need something like a homegrown *Bad Lieutenant*, a film which staggered belief(s), which had you laughing at your own fear(s), strung out on its erotic psychotic shock factor; or something whose surface smarts hid a deep primal shudder of rage, violence, abuse, or a contempo equivalent of the Jean Luc Godard of 60s brilliance — erratic, irruptive, scornful of continuity, (p)lunging from knockabout farce to dark alienation. Like Godard, Adamson knows how to use *noir* as an effect which exposes our own unease (between the sexes, between privacy and the city, between our selves and the and political representation of our selves as part of some dismal demographic), just as the best sci-fi has always used its 'future' daze as a rubric to explore and expose the landscape of the Now.

We've all got signifying monkeys on our backs, and that is ultimately what Adamson is mapping: all the different selves we carry around with us, little cerebral mini-Babels who mutter mutter mutter nonstop, pretending they coexist peacefully in one safe settled 'I', when they're really at one another's throats all of the day and half of the night. His chosen cast of characters — whose surface irony barely masks deep discontent(s) about addiction, race, national unease — is far more serious than some kitschy revival trip. Serious as your (or his) life.

There is always a dark shadow around the corner of his vision. His method is similar to the neo-hoodoo of authors like Ishmael Reed and Danus James, who



appropriate racial stereotypes and make them signify/dissolve. (Where DJ Spooky has a different persona for each LP, Adamson has one for each song.) Adamson makes all manner of genre shadows talk, walk, shiver and scowl. Which is why a track such as "Something Wicked This Way Comes" (with its brilliant use of a Massive Attack itchy-riff — the samplers sampled!) throws most of the MOR 'revival' into stark focus. Everything Adamson arranges turns to poison.

"Vermillion Kisses" might be the key 'text' here — a hilarious gambol/gamble where psychodrama meets fairy tale. The pay-off of the parable seems to be that psychoanalysis is yet another bamboozle that can never heal the wound of difference between men and women. Fairy tale, Oedipal schemata, hardboiled prose, *noir* myths — all of them are attempts to bolster ourselves with language, and all are doomed to fail. It's fitting that it all ends with his old sparring partner Nick Cave crooning "The Sweetest Embrace" — these two share a belief in the old vocabularies: the idea that concepts of hubris, damnation, grace and penance describe us far better than any smartass 20th century syntax ever will. This is soundtrack as conflagration. Mr Adamson, he hide his heart of darknes well; but not so well that we can't all see ourselves in its glassy surface.

IAN PENMAN

Gotham, projecting fevered audio-fantasies — muezzin wails melting into high-desert guitars — on to dub's infinite soundwall. But this is an approach to future music making that has been rendered mundane and familiar by a decade of sampladelic cut 'n' paste jobs. Not sure why Moore felt it necessary to launch himself into the Fourth World on this release: for a white Canadian, I'd have thought a Kingston yard circa 1972 was already an alien environment too far.

TONY NERRINGTON

Henri Dutilleux
The Major Works
ERATO 0630 14068 3CD

Boulez and Dutilleux are the twin eminences of contemporary French music. Henri Dutilleux, more traditionalist and clearly indebted to the so-called impressionists, notably Debussy, is no doubt regarded by Boulez as a reactionary. (Dutilleux is hardly mentioned, for instance, in Paul Griffiths's classic account of the post-war avant garde, *Modern Music And After*.) Spending much of his career in the younger man's shadow, in recent years Dutilleux has been more recognised. Following the celebration of Boulez's 70th birthday last year, this 3CD set is issued to celebrate Dutilleux's 80th.

Adrian Jack recently wrote that Dutilleux is "a sort of latter-day impressionist, whose scented, diaphanous music seems intended to please without provoking stronger responses". That's one view, but it's not true of much of the output on this compilation. A strong case against it is found in *Timbres, Espace, Movement*, inspired by Vincent Van Gogh's visionary and almost expressionist painting *The Starry Night*. (This expressive element is found also in the new *Violin Concerto*, not on this set of discs.) The canvas focuses on the sky, with only a church and cypress tree in the foreground, and the emptiness between foreground and stars led the composer to use the instrumental extremes of the orchestra. The eerie, luminous and often powerful result is 'traditionalist' only in contrast to the work of Boulez and Stockhausen.

If Dutilleux can be powerfully expressive,

there's another contrast with impressionism in his use of integrated, long-term structure. The *Piano Sonata* of 1947 is an early example. Certainly it's tightly-integrated compared with the more fluid conception of some of the later works, but there's perhaps a problem in the lack of memorable melodic ideas (this could be a genuine criticism of Dutilleux's music). The two symphonies, composed in the 1950s, are strong and dramatic statements. *Symphony No 1* is highly colourful, but like the *Piano Sonata* in its tight organisation.

Mystere De L'Instant from 1989 features the exotic colours of the cimbalom, a Hungarian dulcimer taken up by Bartok, the string quartet *Ainsi Le Nuit* is an earlier masterpiece from the 1970s. A superb compilation and excellent introduction to an important contemporary composer.

ANDY HAMILTON

Faust
The Faust Tapes
RER RERF2 CD

Faust
Seventy One Minutes Of.
RER RERF1 CD

The Faust Tapes was first released in 1973 by Virgin. Unfortunately, ReR's re-packaged reissue has removed the album from its original context by failing to include, or even mention, the somewhat perplexing remarks put out by Faust and Virgin on the original sleeve. These informed prospective purchasers that the music was drawn from Faust's library of private tapes (1971-73), that it had been "recorded informally', not subjected to any post-production work, and was "not originally intended for commercial release". Only the "unusually great" interest in the group in Britain had brought about this release of "unofficial material". Most perplexingly, "The group wish to make it clear that this is not to be regarded as their third album, but a bonus release — on sale at the current price of a single."

So, did Faust take *Tapes* seriously, or even expect us to? Was it merely a throwaway trinket to keep the fans amused until "their next official album", which, ironically, was called *Faust IV*. The low retail price (99p back in 73) and the defensive tone of the sleevenotes suggested a note of pusillanimity, a sort of get-out clause, perhaps, in case the collage structure and unpolished sound was ridiculed by uncomprehending critics and fans. Interestingly, *Tapes* is now regarded as the group's classic work, and one of the most innovative albums in rock history. While The Beatles/George Martin (eg "I Am The Walrus" and "Tomorrow Never Knows") and especially Frank Zappa (*Lumpy Gravy*) paved the way, Faust's radical use of the recording studio as a compositional tool produced an amazing work — a series of audacious juxtapositions between psychedelic songs, *musique concrete*, free Improv, abstract electronics, Prog rock and pre-punk rant (Mark E Smith with a German accent). Unsurprisingly, the album continues to be a source of inspiration for avant-gardists of many predilections — from sampler-wielding collagists and lo-fi Industrialists, to avant-rockers and free improvisors. Mandatory listening, of course.

Seventy One Minutes Of — comprises two LPs, most of *Munic & Elsewhere/Return Of A Legend*, which was first issued by ReR in 1986, ten years after Faust's demise (they were reborn in 1990), and *Faust Party Three*, parts of which had previously appeared as limited edition EPs and singles, plus two previously unreleased tracks. The recordings date from 1971-75, reminding us that as well as being purveyors of powerful sonic disorientation, Faust also savoured the smack of a sturdy backbeat, had a daft sense of humour, and relished the haunting lyricism that an off-centre melody can bring. While nothing here matches "Jennifer" or "The Sad Skinhead", the lovely "Psalter" comes mighty close.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Jimmy Giuffre/Paul Bley/Steve Swallow
Conversations With A Goose
SOUL NOTE 121258 CD

Evan Parker/Barry Guy/Paul Lytton
The Redwood Session
CIMP #101 CD

Giuffre, Bley and Swallow still seem like a best-kept secret. Bley has become as prolific as cornflakes in recent years, but Giuffre's more measured discography remains relatively sparse. On the basis of this recording (from 1993), they're still elaborating on the crucial modern text of *Free Fall*, fortunately just restored to circulation by Columbia. "Totally improvised music, but that means we pass through some standards on the way," says Giuffre, and this is a rare kind of jazz: entirely free playing conditioned in a thoroughgoing way by the tradition. You can get any number of groups that are prepared to go free, or are able to call up a chord sequence in an otherwise liberated music, but it's hard to find one that speaks this language as penetratingly as this one does. What it seems to speak of is a certain reserve, a particular restraint, built into the group's collective psyche. None of these players is actually much given to rough-housing anyway, but the chamberish feel is an exacting frame of reference for Bley's extremes of harmony, or Giuffre's a-thematic figures. It's an inconsistent record: some of the music is a mere meander from point to point. The best of it has purpose, elegance, a wry, almost devious wit.

Where that trio work over brief durations, Parker, Guy and Lytton take their customary long-form approach. This is a well-documented group by now, and their CIMP release — recorded in the rather naked mix which this new label prefers — is perhaps no more or less than another chapter. It's as vivid as anything they've done, though: sample the dense area of activity which constitutes "Craig's Story". Joe McPhee sits in for the final track, which breaks up into bits and pieces as a result — an object lesson in how closely the other three men think and play.

RICHARD COOK

Graham Central Station
Graham Central Station
WARNER BROS 7599 26339 CD

Graham Central Station
Release Yourself
WARNER BROS 7599 26352 CD

Graham Central Station
Ain't No 'Bout-A-Doubt It
WARNER BROS 7599 26346 CD

It is possible to trace funk back to New Orleans, to the one-step-forward-half-a-step-back strut of second-liners

following a Mardi Gras float. For what it's worth, the *Grove Dictionary Of Jazz* describes funk as "complex, interlocking, syncopated rhythmic patterns in duple meter." More crucially, funk foregrounds the *bass*. Because the beat is now multiple — not Motown's metric tambourine saying, "Here's the beat, Whitey" — the bass guitarist can step into the limelight. Hence Larry Graham's role as one of funk's original architects, the inventor of the slap bass.

Moving to Oakland, California from Texas as a child, Graham learned piano and drums and took up guitar aged 11. He played with his mother in local jazz clubs, attracting attention by singing and playing organ bass-pedals and guitar simultaneously. When the pedals broke he missed the 'bottom' of the music and bought himself a bass guitar. Then the drummer left, so he developed a percussive way of playing — thumb slaps and finger plucks to imitate bass drum and snare respectively. This was a low-rent version of the way John Coltrane used harmonics to transform his tenor saxophone into an entire orchestra. On the first album by Graham Central Station, the group he formed after leaving Sly And The Family Stone, a tune like "Can You Handle It?" seems to be carried entirely by Graham's massive bass, a seething one-man electric ensemble buoying ecstatic gospel vocals.

Graham Central Station has a similar teeming, tribal vibe to Sly's rainbow coalition. His elastic, wide-range vocals mesh with Patryce 'Chocolate' Banks's gorgeous stridency, creating a communal ethos very different from the macho singularity of soul. The classics are the self-titled debut (1973) and *Release Yourself* (1974), with its iconic cover photo of beflared group members cavorting on the steps of a white-painted, wooden-slat country church. Willie Wild's drums were crude, and recording is blurred, but the writhing confusion is intoxicating.

Graham was a musician first: his gospel background and funky bass just happened to fit the times. *Release Yourself*'s "GSC" simply celebrates the band, while on *Ain't No Bout-A-Doubt It*'s "It Ain't Nothing But A Warner Bros Party" Graham advertised the delights of fellow signees Little Feat and The Doobies. The bassist did not have the politics or artistry to negotiate success. *Release Youself* concludes with "Luckiest People", an ominous piece of Engelbert Humperdinck/Harry Secombe balladry, but worse was to come. On *Ain't No Bout-A-Doubt It*, production improves in terms of separation and clarity, but cute concepts, like the jokey rock 'n' roll of "Easy Rider", dilute the group's heady impact.

More re-releases are scheduled, charting Graham's gradual decline into corporate soul and Frankie Valli-style pop nonsense. There are musical gems (*Mirror* from 1976 has an extraordinary overdubbed track called "Forever" with swathes of synths creating unique electronic mindscapes), but by 1982, with "Sooner Or Later", Graham was reduced to imitating Warners' newest discovery, Prince. A *Best Of* package highlights Graham's biggest hit, "One In A Million" — terminally dreadful Hollywood schmaltz (the kind of MOR normalcy even Mike Flowers is unable to redeem), but *Graham Central Station* and *Release Yourself* are essential testaments to the glory that was 70s funk.

BEN WATSON

Sheila Chandra
ABoneCroneDrone
REAL WORLD CDRW56 CD

There is an experimental spirit, not really a tradition, in England that crops up in all kinds of non-academic music. An eccentricity that draws in, attracts and affects people from all over the world, as baffling as the weather or seaside postcards. This spirit informs the best music of Percy Grainger (Australian), for example, also John White (born in Berlin), The Beatles, Django Bates and Sheila Chandra — all charismatic performers as well as creative forces.

Over the past decade and a half, Sheila Chandra and Steve Coe (producer, composer, husband) have built up an impressive body of work, starting with the 'Indipop' of Monsoon and moving in to the breathtaking "Speaking In Tongues" series. This new album, the third in a trilogy for Real World, is the most experimental, but in some respects the most satisfying yet. The six tracks, each about seven or eight minutes long, explore the music and movement that emerge from within apparently static drones. Whether made with voices, Indian drone instruments, didgeridoos, bagpipes, guitars or electronics, the thick tapestries of sound always contain some fine threads of melody. It's almost as if someone took one of those Magic Eye paintings and created art by tracing the games played by the eye while trying to see something recognisable.

ABoneCroneDrone is not a drone album in the 'pure' sense of JLIAT, or Charlemagne Palestine, who would spend hours with sustained organ notes looking for the 'golden sound', or Cas De Marez, whose remarkable *Cathédrale De Chant* explored the multitracked build-up of pan-tonal vocal clusters in a cathedral in Utrecht. Whether or not Coe and Chandra are aware of such these artists, or other experimentalists, such as LaMonte Youn and trombonist Fayyaz Virji, it doesn't matter. Drones are universal, primordial. You can create one yourself by leaning on a synth keyboard, or singing long tones with a bunch of friends (I used to do this before gigs — it clears the head and empties the dressing room). From laser printers to central heating pipes to electric pencil sharpeners (which George Russell used to evoke the primeval soup), drones dominate the audio landscape of modern lives as well. The point is to pay attention, as Cage might have said.

The artistry of *ABoneCroneDrone* is in the attention to detail. The album is beautifully performed, recorded, mixed and compiled with intelligence and a strong sense of structure. It makes good use of a listener's valuable time while issuing a challenge to hear in a fresh way. How inspiring to find that the British pop business can occasionally support and nurture new work as creative as this.

JOHN L WALTERS

High Rise
Disallow
PSF PSFD 78 CD

Mainliner
Mellow Out
CHARNEL MUSIC/LA MUSICA CHCD-19 CD

Was it excessive exposure to MC5 or Merzbow that caused these extravagant forays into overlording and overloading? Either way, High Rise, Japan's psychedelic best, come souped up, all searing feedback and shredded speakers. (Oh, and you can add early Velvets to that list — as much of it as there was between the end of Cale's and Reed's crummy demos and the post-Cale return to good old fashioned melody.)

Bassist Asahito Nanjo seems to have got himself a nice little monopoly as far as Tokyo's premier league of power rock trios goes. High Rise, Mainliner and Musica Transonic are handsome variations on the idea that rock should be dirty, ruthless, in-yer-face and a touch cerebral too without having to turn itself into some kind of pantomime act. The Western *Kerrang!* generation

should try waking up to these groups at full throttle

Not that it is all reverie this time around A while back, High Rise, the nearest of Nanjo's projects to Rock Norm, gave us a live album so intense it could melt the rubber backing of your carpet *Disallow*, their first studio recording with new drummer Pill (once of Jap thrashnicks Lip Cream), lacks the sterility of previous visits to the booth, but still falls short of capturing the group at its most fearsome It's best when it's kept simple high-volt rifferama, heavy on the footpedals and the wattage, accounts for four of the five tracks, whilst the closer, "Grab", is a mouldy freeform freakout with Pill proving that he's not up to improvising

Cutting loose isn't a problem for Mainliner (the High Rise trio minus Pill) Hajime Koizumi is a free jazz drummer who can seemingly roll better than many of his rock counterparts, yet he's playing time for most of *Mellow Out* Even with the volume set low this album sounds like it's flaying your speakers alive Psyche-drenched guitar, fuzzed-fuzz bass and high octane drumming burn out of the speakers like an alien-possessed Black Sabbath on speed This is rock 'n' roll for texture freaks A collaboration with Merzbow wouldn't be too ludicrous an idea

DAVID ILIC

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan
Intoxicated Spirit

SHANACHIE 64066 CD

Earlier this century there was much enthusiasm in the West for the work of certain Oriental poets the Persian *Rubaiyat Of Omar Khayyam* or the mystic writings of the Lebanese Kahlil Gibran With a shift of medium, from the poetry book to the CD and movie soundtrack, we now find a similarly wide acceptance for the Sufi devotional music of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan *Night Song*, a collaboration with Michael Brook, and a contribution to the soundtrack of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* are two of Nusrat's most recent excursions This Shanachie release is a Pakistani recording, mainly live in concert

Nusrat has one of the world's great distinctive voices, like Youssou N'Dour or Randy Newman And his traditional Qawwali style, with its relaxed rhythm, handclapping and a strong backbeat, is easy to enjoy Strong melodic lines are passed among the various singers in his 'Party', and sung in chorus This is extrovert, rough-edged music, with its heart on its sleeve, embracing the whole audience in ecstatic praise of wine and love *"The eyes of my sweetheart are so bewitchingly red that even the best wine of the tavern pales in comparison"*

Three of the four tracks cover the same musical ground rather relentlessly, the fourth adds a dulcimer and fiddle to the usual harmonium and percussion, and seems to be recorded at a different event, with no audience There are slight imperfections in the recording, and the presentation is perfunctory — no dates, only one song translated, and virtually no information And then the creeping worry that Nusrat's health may be affecting his performance, which would explain why there are few extended solo displays here, and plenty of robust ensemble singing by the rest of the Party I would suspect there are better and subtler performances available elsewhere

CLIVE BELL

King Crimson
Thrakattak

DISCIPLINE GLOBAL MOBILE DGM 9604 CD

While 99 per cent of pop/rock groups still see live performances as nothing more than an opportunity to reproduce studio recordings in front of an audience (and 99 per cent of pop/rock fans expect this), King Crimson have regularly incorporated structured and free improvisation into their live sets For a group that's been reviled (as well as revered) for nearly 30 years, they've certainly taken more creative risks than most Their albums have also included significant chunks of Improv, the earliest being the ten minutes or so of low-key guitar, drums and vibes that comprise the better part of "Moonchild" on their 1969 debut, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, others include *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* (1973), *Starless And Bible Black* (1974) and *Red* (1974) However, the most impressive place to sample 70s King Crimson Improv is the 1973-74 4CD set *The Great Deceiver*, released by Virgin in 1992

But *Thrakattak* goes further than any previous Crimson album, being the first to consist entirely of improvisations The eight here were recorded live on the latest double-trio's (Fripp/Bruford/Belew/Levin, plus new boys Trey Gunn and Pat Mastelotto) 1995 THRAK tour of Japan and the USA Everybody having embraced new electronic technology for guitars or percussion, this is the most hi-tech and extreme sounding KC to date The scale and density of this music sometimes borders on the terrifying, as layer upon traumatic layer of noise, distortion and warped tonality build up But the disciplined construction of these dark forces is always evident The two percussionists use space intelligently, saving their combined polyrhythmic attack for well-timed, sporadic bursts, Bruford's ornate marimba runs and Gunn's (presumably) Warr guitar, which sounds like a piano recall the tone colours and staccato clusters of The Cecil Taylor Unit or Olivier Messiaen Yet, this is distinctive Crimson music, so much so that for all its MIDI sophistication, Fripp's 'soundscaping' system is often used to create the sort of overarching, nightmarish string/choral sounds that emerged from two temperamental mellotrons in the mid-70s As powerful a collision between Improv and avant rock as you're likely to hear, *Thrakattak* is King Crimson's finest hour

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Kronos Quartet
Howl USA

ELEKTRA NONESUCH 7559 79372 CD

No surprises here for anyone who attended this hip San Francisco quartet's concerts last year Not because *Howl* is a record of the events (it isn't), but because, with the Quartet's increasing attention to themed concerts and billings, it was only a matter of time before they went American on us

And *Howl* is a quintessentially American album, although the tattered flag that adorns its cover (Mapplethorpe, the photographer of Waywardness, US) gives a hint of what we're going to find a fine Harry Partch piece, *Barstow Eight Hitchhikers' Inscriptions*, its inspiration dating from the Depression, Michael Daugherty's *Sing Sing J Edgar Hoover*, Scott Johnson's *Cold War Suite* (from *How It Happens*), and Lee Hyla's orchestration of Allen Ginsberg's own reading of *Howl* As a revisionist trawl through recent American history, the texts — on what is the Kronos's first collection to foreground human voices —

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Low were awarded single of the week in the NME/Melody Maker for their two eps, 'transmission' and 'finally' ' released this year their quiet underrated songs are filled with suspense and an acute sense of longing, and they create haunting minimal arrangements which resonate with certainty

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Alec Empire
The Destroyer
DIGITAL HARDCORE RECORDINGS DHR 4 CD

Squarepusher
Feed Me Weird Things
REPHLEX CAT037 CD/2LP

James Hardway
Deeper Wider Smoother Shit
RECORDINGS OF SUBSTANCE HEMP 3 CD

"Fuck the Nazi Punks up their asses" "I hate people who romanticise death. This is not what it's all about! At the end of this we all gonna die and that's it! Not more and not less! You fucking religious idiots stupid like shit."

Two extracts from the sleeve of Alec Empire's *The Destroyer*. They depict Empire as some kind of all purpose Avenging Angel against both rock complacency and what he sees as the Prog rock connotations of House raves. And far more seriously, against the almost too obvious, too-ridiculous-to-be-considered appropriation of Techno as a metaphor for Aryan efficiency by neo-Nazi groups in his native Germany. Simon Reynolds's interview with Empire (*The Wire* 146) presented a picture of an intelligent, opinionated, politically-motivated individual who, as the above quotes exemplify, isn't afraid of speaking his mind. Reynolds reckons that as a genre Empire's Digital Hardcore is essentially "a wake-up call" — well you certainly won't get much sleep with *The Destroyer* on the decks.

The monstrous, abrasive, phucked-up beats are like flattened-out Jungle without the inwardly spiralling complexity. But they are meted with such severity that you begin to wonder what — except speed and a certain attitude — stands between this and Industrial music's punitive assault. *The Destroyer* is so brutally uncompromising, both texturally and timbrally, that a full hour-plus is like a dose of medicine. It's good for you, but you're also pleased when you've had enough.

Squarepusher's *Feed Me Weird Things* recalls one of Empire's earlier projects, the *Hypermodern Jazz 2000.5* album. If the content of that capricious, perverse record had reflected its title more literally, then it might have sounded like this intermittently astonishing release. The jazz/fusion elements present throughout the drum 'n' bass matrix are made overt here with outrageously complex drum programming. Tom Jenkinson — the Squarepusher — also plays genuine manual funky bass. Together with the background keyboards it sounds like 70s jazz funk given a severe roasting. On "Dimotane Co" a lazy dub intro ushers in an amazingly complex rhythm track like a double-speed Tony Williams playing hammer-drill paradiddles, utterly tangential to the main rhythm. Jenkinson's bass parts are more Jaco Pastorius than super-sub slides. With Squarepusher's head-stretching hard beats, the odd interludes during which the brain cells can regroup are welcome.

Compared to this, James Hardway's album is a much more soothing balm. Hardway (real name David Harrow)'s CV encompasses spells with Psychic TV, African Headcharge, On-U Sound, Jah Wobble, Lee Perry and all sorts of extra-curricular activities including writing lyrics for Billie Ray Martin. More recently Hardway/Harrow has concentrated on mutant-Techno project Technova. *Deeper Wider...* is a sort of mentholated jazz drum 'n' bass excursion — rhythmically it often merely marks time. Some funky R&B horns on "Horns At The End", and *The Wire*'s own Clive Bell, playing flute on "Clive Goes Crazy", are the highlights. The latter title isn't too appropriate. A little more craziness would have given the album a welcome edge.

MIKE BARNES

Squarepusher

PHOTO: MAURO COLUCCI

are all faultless. Ginsberg needs no introduction (and Hyla's setting allows the poet's voice its foreground), although the voice of political journalist IF Stone, as featured on Johnson's work, might.

As such, *Howl* might be seen as part of a larger tendency among US artists, Laurie Anderson included, intended to challenge the existing complacencies and suggest that a new form of censorship exists. (These four works were all specially commissioned, although it perhaps should be noted that the National Endowment for the Arts, which provided part of the funding, is now defunct — the political battles surrounding that are well documented elsewhere.) But how revisionist is the music? The Quartet's early successes were based, arguably, on revisionist European music (Arvo Part *et al*), and the attention they accrued for championing such work was well deserved. Now, in the light of a resurgence of innovative work among young US composers, these seem sadly lacking. Daugherty's *Sing Sing* uses an impressive collage of voice samples taken from archives detailing the McCarthyite madness (some obtained only after invoking freedom of information controls), but, after Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, his endless, disorientating glissandi seem uninspired. Hyla's and Johnson's works have a sad lack of presence and the album is only seriously redeemed by the maverick genius of Partch and the fine, rhythmical reading that Ben Johnston provides.

LOUISE GRAY

Fela Kuti
Open & Close
STERNS AFRICAN CLASSICS ST3010 CD

The release of any new Fela material begs the question: how many Fela albums does anyone actually need? With

his vaguely "Cold Sweat"-era James Brown textures criss-crossed by Yoruba polyrhythms and pidgin sloganeering, Fela is a genre unto himself. Featuring all of the elements that make him in equal measures utterly compelling and insufferably monotonous, *Open & Close* is as good a place for the uninitiated to start as any of his other albums, but probably too unremarkable for anyone, other than completists, already familiar with Afro-beat.

Originally released in 1975, *Open & Close* was one of the first albums that saw Fela move away from his jazzier side towards his concept of a pan-African music based on the Godfather's explicitly political material. Like the musicians of Senegal and Zaire who attempted to re-Africanise Cuban rhythms, Fela tried to rearrange funk for a group sophisticated enough to have a *lead* conga player. Indulgences from the time he spent in London's late 60s jazz scene still creep in, though, and his less than inspiring keyboard and sax meanderings undercut some pretty fearsome shekere-led grooves. And, like the megalomaniac he is, the mix emphasises the horns and keyboards at the expense of the brilliant drummer Tony Allen.

Perhaps more than anybody else, Fela explores the nether region between the literal and metaphorical meanings of 'groove' — funk's no man's land between hypnosis and bump and grind. Without the bouncing sinuosity of the JBs, Fela's rhythm section comp for a trance-inducing eternity, but they never build up, much less resolve, any tension. Guitarists Tutu Sorunmu and Ohiri Akigbe riff like crazy, but I can't help wonder what a chicken scratch artist like Nile Rodgers would do to Fela's groove. Nevertheless, *Open & Close* is near enough to the spell-binding dynamics of *Zombie* (one Fela album you definitely need) to make it enjoyable, if not wholly satisfying.

PETER SHAPIRO

Magma
Bruxelles 1971 — Theatre 140
SEVENTH/AKT VIII 2CD

Magma
Inedits
SEVENTH REX XIX CD

If Magma really are about the 'life after death', as Christian Vander insists, you couldn't get much more of a tumultuous confirmation than these reissued CDs.

The sound quality on the Brussels recording often jars, the group advance and recede somewhat arbitrarily at times, and with Magma as raw-edged as this, the experience can be a little frazzling. But it's a testament to the staggering energy as well as the phenomenal compositional calculation of Vander that this unearthly racket is being created by basically a straight jazz sextet — two horns, trumpet, piano, bass and drums, with Klaus Blasquiz giving it some on vocals and occasional percussion.

From the demented caterwaulings and Shepp-esque stops-out cacophony that heralds "Stoah", you know this is an album to strap yourself down for. It's also instructive as to less obvious Vander influences. Coltrane yes, but also Sun Ra too, in spades. Parts of "Stoah" and "Kobaia" are real soul-train stuff, with Motownish horns veering off into Bartokian melodies over funk basslines. It's amazing how little of this early material is improvised, with only the contributions of saxophonist Teddy Lasry and pianist Francois Cahen (excellent throughout, a kind of gentle aesthete lost amidst a brawl in a free jazz club) breaking free of the score. But the ritualised nature of much of the music, wild ostinati and mad staccato phrases played by the entire ensemble with Blasquiz's incessant ranting overhead, reminded me more than once of Eve Libertine's deranged mantras in Crass.

Inedits collects live and studio recordings from 1972-75, two tracks (including the colossal "Terrien Si Je T'ai Convoque") played by the Brussels line-up. Vander's developing fondness for more conventional Western utterance, notably period fusion and classical chord voicings, is especially salient on "Om Zanka" from the mammoth all-electric 1975 septet featuring violinist Didier Lockwood. What is constant, though, is the blazing intensity, a cliche, true, but this is music to which any approach other than bare-knuckle is simply alien. Don't be intimidated, though. Once you're on the rollercoaster, it's an exhilarating ride.

By the way, has anyone else noticed that the Magma logo typeface is the same as that used by *The Goodies*?

PAUL STUMP

Nicolette
Let No One Live Rent Free In Your Head
TALKIN LOUD 532814 CD/MC/LP

Nicolette's distinguishing trait is that of providing a quiet shiver of a voice at the centre of towers-of-dub noise blocs. She has come to us in bits and pieces, kicking off with pioneer proto-Junglists Shut Up And Dance — which in retrospect now looks like a good place to learn her moves: how to position her voice in among different beats, how to keep the line without sacrificing unpredictability. Jungle can often disappoint when, over fantastic, otherworld beats, some plonker-DJs pick and mix the same old soul-diva wailings and exhortations. Nicolette is a quirkier proposition, and it was obvious she couldn't remain a mere prop for long. Her whispy E-type gypsy voice settled perfectly into the two songs she sang on Massive Attack's *Protection*, she came over like a Billie Holiday for the chill-out room, a voice which ghosted through your mind like an itchy dream during a siesta nap, summer air and herbal smoke and post-coital blues twined into one feint trajectory. When the marvellously catchy single "No Government" announced her solo trip, it looked like we might be able to look forward to the first crossover female Jungle star, not just a packaged hum-drum diva or the anonymous voice fronting a baldy-boy boffincore band. It was easy to overlook "No Government"'s deeply silly no-cogitation lyrics because it was one of those singles that snags your memory first go and won't *let* go.

Shame then, that I can't really recommend the LP — whose Clintonesque (George, not Bill) title is about its most memorable aspect.

It gradually emerges that being able to overlook silly vapid lyrics for one single doesn't apply to the length of a CD. Where they're not silly, then they're just generic Noo Age soul tosh: what do we know? Where do we go? Be nice to one another, etc. With Bjork — love her or loathe her — when you get to the end of a song or CD, you at least feel as if you know who's been singing, at the end of *Rent Free* you have no real idea of who Nicolette is. She's someone who likes nice days and thinks everything would be lovely-dovey if there were no governments. (As opposed to being worried that there'd be no fire service or postal service or electricity grids if there were no governments, say, in which case it'd be that tiny bit harder to be a Noovo hippy chick with a CD to flog.) Not only are the lyrics unmemorable piffle, the arrangements are unmemorable generic post-Techno or Wibble Hop. The slow numbers lack the gravitas of the Massive boys, and none of the uptempo tracks discloses one iota of Metalheadzy rip-it-up inventiveness. So you're just left with the unvarying lickle-gurly timbre of Nicolette's voice, which, like the lyrics, really is a bit much to stick with through a whole CD.

Things reach some kind of nadir with an *extremely* misjudged gloopy version of "Where Have All The Flowers Gone", which takes her borderline hippy-twit persona and paints it 11 feet high in flashing red neon. Bjork herself barely gets away with her choice of cover versions — because old fashioned Tin Pan Alley-ish songs rely on an economy of expression to match their precision of text.

You have to have been in the game a while before you can take on such songs with any real confidence, or any half decent chance of doing something new with them. This is virtually unlistenable — the Acified Jazz equiv of an *Eastenders* planner knees up nause-up.

IAN PENMAN

NRG Ensemble
This Is My House
DELMARK DE-485 CD

Hard to tell without being on the spot, but the initiative in Chicago's new music seems — on the basis of records emerging in the last couple of years — to have moved decisively away from the AACM axis and into the hands of groups like this one. Under the tutelage of paterfamilias Hal Russell, The NRG Ensemble was a multicoloured jumble of jazz threads. Under Mars Williams, who shares sax duties with Ken Vandermark, it's more like Sgt Rock's Easy Co. Williams and Vandermark are masters of sax furioso: when twinned by Brian Sandstrom, whose occasional Hendrixisms only crawl through when he's not doing elemental bass or colourist trumpet, it's on the edge of all-out madness. There can't be many more coruscating performances in recent years than "Straight Time", which for pure assault outdoes — well, name your favourite hard man.

One could complain that the

occasional sparkle of the old NRG is missing. Most of this music seems created under a pall of darkness, as exhilarating as the playing is, and on the very, very slowly evolving "Cut Flowers" we're going with a 16rpm dirge, not a ballad. But Williams blows aside the kind of eccentricity which sometimes made Russell's music fallible. With Sandstrom and Kent Kessler both handling bass duties, the bottom end has a thickly churning quality which acts as the cement for the wildcat improvising. Steve Hunt could use a bigger, clearer sound at the drums, perhaps, but that might rob NRG of what is now a highly distinctive character in the studios. Along with Vandermark's *Caffeine* and the so-far-unrecorded spin-off Witches & Devils this is a manifesto for new Chicago that makes compelling, noisy sense.

RICHARD COOK

The Orb
John Peel Sessions

ORANGE FRUIT SFR 138 CD

The Orb
Auntie Aubrey's Excursions Beyond The Call Of Duty: The Orb Remix Project

DEVIANT DVNT 12 CD/MC/LP

This is the second volume of John Peel sessions by The Orb. The first set was from 1989, while the four Radio One broadcasts here are from 1992 and 95. So the first two tracks were recorded in the afterglow of 1991's Ambientastic *Adventures Beyond The Ultraworld*. Although the Peel Sessions total 37 minutes, it might be better to see this as a single release, because the 13 minute "Oobe" is far and away the best thing here. Riding on an acoustic guitar loop, hoarse wooden flutes puff away in the midst of The Orb's own dingly-dell full of cosmic whizzes, grinning drones and outerspace percussion. There's lots of bird and insect song, a snatch of a children's story about Poppy and Sneezy, and it's all as charmingly English as a cream tea on a summer lawn. After six minutes or so, when you're thinking it might be fade time, they bring in the bass and drums, and we're off into the Pink Floydian sunset. John Peel must have enjoyed the deja vu.

The other track from 1992 is a sniggering cover of The Stooges' "No Fun", which was also a Sex Pistols encore this year in Finsbury Park. It has a sub-Rotten vocal and a lot of pissing about with effects, but I did not enjoy it one bit. The two 1995 sessions are OK but not great. "Montagne d'Or" has fine drumming, and is that the steel guitar of Mr BJ Cole? "Valley" is another likeable ten-minute stoned melange.

Listening to The Orb reminds me of snorkelling in the Mediterranean. *"You can explore new worlds for just two dollars,"* says a voice on "Montagne d'Or". You're doggy-paddling along, blowing bubbles and gazing at the schools of little orange fish, when suddenly you swim over an underwater cliff and a great watery space gapes below you. The opening track of *The Orb Remix Project* is 17 minutes long: plenty of tabla-driven rhythm, processed Indian vocals and oboes... then at 12 minutes in, it all stops and you're left hanging in space, hovering in bliss, still blowing bubbles.

The *Remix Project* is a double CD, a big chocolate box of fattening Orb delights totalling over two and a half hours. 18 of The Orb's remix projects are here, plus a 72-page book offering complete discography and mixography, and photos of all Orb record covers known to mankind. Musically, the overall standard of Orb-type playful experimentation is very high. And it's not all Ambient wash, either, for Keiichi Suzuki's "Satellite Serenade" suddenly the sound is tidied up into a Kraftwerk-style kaleidoscope of tiny synthetic beats.

On most of these remixes very little survives of the original song. One of the attractive things about The Orb has always been that they work on their own terms. For example, the Yello song "You Gotta Say Yes To Another Excess" becomes an excuse for a duet involving Iranian dulcimer and trumpeting rhino (I'm guessing). The remix as erasure. And yes, there's an Erasure track too: "Ship Of Fools", only here it's the "Orbital Southsea Isles Of Holy Beats Mix".

CLIVE BELL

Outland
Outland II

FAX PW28 CD

Air
Air III

FAX PK 08/116 CD

Is the Namlook prodigality finally at an end? Germany's belt-feeder of Ambient seems pretty ambient himself of late, why, only two records a week seems now to be the norm.

Fact is, after serious distribution problems, Namlook's output could do with a bit of retardation, especially if these two fine records are anything to go by. Whether the crises have focused Namlook on his work, or whether he simply wants to spend more time on it, is a moot point. Whatever, *Outland II* (with Bill Laswell along for the ride) is a six-movement, 59 minute "electronic sonata" (well, not quite, Pete) called "African Virus". Trademark slo-mo pulses and long-breathed chords alternate with lengthy percussive episodes of almost uncontrollable elan. The third movement of "African Virus" is a *tour de force* of textural improvisation, the rhythm itself becoming the subject for timbral tampering and treatment, so that the beat creates a charged palette of sound — a far cry from the likes of Schulze and legions of other dullard Germanic electronic epigoni who relied merely on notes, chords and the filters-and-white-noise approach.

Air III finds a solitary Namlook in uneven though often spellbinding form. rhythm also dominates this 65-minute four-part work, but once again it is subjected to exhaustive attention and decorative ingenuity. The long "Est-ce Que L'Amour Fait Mal" could score a Venusian hardcore porn flick, mixing breathy voice samples, a loping funk bassline and distorted, endlessly recycled Pink Floyd and Andreas Vollenweider pastiches draped all over the music.

Namlook seems set to quit the chill-out room for good and join the massed ranks of 'serious' synth composers. This should not be any cause for wailing and gnashing of teeth — rather, it should be seen as a shot in the arm for one of the most moribund genres in contemporary music.

PAUL STUMP

Pablo's Eye
You Have A Yearning For Perfection

EXTREME XEP 031 CD

Pablo's Eye
Prepare For Others To Follow

SWIM 11 CD

As an open-ended project headed by Belgian musician Axel Libeert, the seven-year history of Pablo's Eye induces a tacit envy: compositions to celebrate the multiculturalism of the Barcelona Olympics (a tack that was used to great effect on *You Love Chinese Food*), stuff for the French government, and now, with the 11 mixes of "Prepare" on this extended CD single, an ad campaign for a Pioneer CD jukebox.

It's been noted before that Pablo's Eye make music which defies the descriptive word. Not just because Electronica, sampladelia, treated sources (all of which PE use) are difficult to describe (one needs, perhaps, to search out some other framework altogether), or because Libeert's emphasis on textures is so acute. It has something to do with the controlled atmospherics, the way one loses all sense of gravity on occasion. Having said that, *You Have A Yearning For Perfection*, which has been out for a while now, does have a sense of drama which develops over time. Five barely distinguished edits with codenames as titles, the opening strings and breathy, melismatic female vocals would fit into most soft Electronica categories, although anyone hoping to use this as a travelcard towards bliss would be shocked back to a disturbingly psychotic sensibility by the frantic ticking rhythms or bangings that phase in and out.

It's this greater sense of rhythm that informs the *Prepare* mixes — two provided by Front 242's Daniel B and Swim Records' Immersion. There's the customary attention to detail (although, here, any vocal ornamentations are dispensed with), and to ambience. A product of its time, there are drum 'n' bass elements in some of the later mixes, but they don't compare to the ominous air-beatings that PE's electronics deliver.

LOUISE GRAY

Charlemagne Palestine
Four Manifestations On Six Elements

BAROONI BAR 014 CD

Even though he deserves to be listed alongside the masters of minimalist music, the Brooklyn-born composer Charlemagne Palestine remains a shadowy presence besides the likes of Reich, Glass, LaMonte Young, Terry Riley, *et al*. In a recently published study on mimimalism, Palestine fails to even get a mention in the index, although in

The Fall
The Light User Syndrome
JET RECORDS JETCD 1012 CD/LP

PHOTO: WAYNE HOUGHTON

Eggheads, boneheads, tell me did you really expect still to be feeling the need to queue? And have you ever found a simple way to explain why we're still queuing, still faithful, to those that pass by, shaking their disbeliever-heads? Is anything harder than trying to say why something's impossibly funny, ludicrously great, when you're faced with someone who wilfully won't get it? (Didn't some sage once describe them as sounding like a bad youth-club band?)

Let's just start with things that forced me to laugh (out loud). The title "DIY Meat". The 'German' that Mark speaks in "Das Vulture Ans Ein Nutter-Wain", and also the tossed little constellation of organ notes that open it. The unveiling of one Mike Bennett as 'new Fall singer' for "Old White Train" (a 'standard', allegedly), Bennett being not only the record's co-producer but also — and this is the real achievement — very nearly as tone-deaf as old MES himself. The fuzzed-out mantra in "Interlude/Chilinism" — *"Chiseller, He was a god-damn chiseller"* — or Brix's unexpected line a little further on: *"Pink Floyd are shorts!"* ("Interlude/Chilinism" being a several-act collage-epic in the Fall tradition of "Spectre Vs Rector", say.) The scrambled industrial loop that several times interrupts "Cheetham Hill" — which seems to be based round the riff of Bowie's "Heroes". (Who let *that* through?) The chorus — if that's the correct technical term — of "Oxymoron": *"Mr Murder's fair! SCRUFFED-up!"* The vibraphone glide of "Secession Man", with intriguing much-repeated closing phrase, *"Inside outside turn around — other men!"* and homoerotic S&M subtext. (Am I imagining this?)

Later for what any of this might mean: though it's untrue that MES is a wilfully obscure lyric-writer, there's no question it takes time to come at a Fall song from the right angle to be in sync with its peculiar brand of simplicity. If there's a dizzying — not to say disorientating — sense that Smith is finally turning his mind to the interpersonal politics of desire, well, don't quote me on that: who knows what will turn out to be a figure for what, when the riddle clarifies? For now, the elements that grab are all relatively formal: the abstractedly relaxed and louche slur that Mark's formerly iron-hard yell seems to be turning towards; the density of the balance between individual pop and general noise-architecture, a multifold use of variation of textured distance, fiercely vibrational (and sound-*filled*) soundspace, and consciously ragged unisons, emphasising more than ever the sense that this is a *group*, not a one-man band, the peculiar marriage between Simon Wolstenholme's hurtling if cranky Techno-riffs and Karl Burns's and Steve Hanley's very human, very physical (very Fall-ish) drums-bounce and bass-kick (the emergence of a 'dance-music' dimension was first noted on *The Infotainment Scan*, to be sure, but it sure didn't get back then).

The other thing to say is that *The Light User Syndrome* is the record that made me go back and listen to all the others (and to hunt down the ones I'd missed, and worst of all, to download from the Web 124 pages of Fall lyrics as guessed-at and transcribed by another nutcase, in Arizona). I was going to add that of course there was always going to be such a record — until it struck me what a strange remark that would be, if applied to any other group.

MARK SINKER

New York critic Tom Johnson's excellent *The Voice Of New Music*, he is cited as an important performer and eccentric

One reason Palestine remained a peripheral figure even during minimalism's 60s/70s heyday was because his records, when they appeared at all, were released on obscure labels in tiny editions Mercifully, the curious can pick up Palestine's recording more easily now they have been reissued on CD *Strumming*, his great work for the French Shandar label, has already resurfaced, and now the Dutch Baroonl label has reissued the ultra-scarce *Four Manifestations On Six Elements* (originally released on a private art gallery label as a double LP) So rare is the original LP that this re-release could be considered as a new album from Palestine, who has since turned his back on musical composition for a fine arts career Consisting of two electronic sections — a pair of finely tuned insect drones that nod in the direction of his contemporary LaMonte Young — and two long piano pieces which glide hypnotically from his beloved Bösendorfer, Palestine produces music that cascades from his keyboard to flood the imagination with hallucinatory tremblings and haunted remembrances

The manic side of the man, the piano string-busting, cognac-swigging, Iggy Pop-style character described in Johnson's book, never shows its face here Instead we are left with the subtle electronic roar of *Three Fifths* to remind us that Palestine's change of creative direction was minimalism's greatest loss

EDWIN POUNCEY

Jeremy Peyton Jones
North South East West
NEW TONE 129806748 CD

Jeremy Peyton Jones is one of a small constellation of British composers who first came to public attention — if not to prominence — in the early 80s by means of their particular assertive approach to music and performance Jones is a founder member of Regular Music (here present in its second incarnation), an ensemble which took its cues from developments across the Atlantic It was a group, formed in much the same way as Philip Glass and Steve Reich had instituted their own ensembles, to play their composers' music, and to explore and develop their own divergent current of British minimalism

North South East West collects six pieces of music which Peyton Jones had written, for voice and ensemble between 1981 (*Purcell Manoeuvres*, written for, and not surprisingly, The Michael Nyman Band) and 1992 (*The Gazetteer Of World Order*) There is a strong commitment to a sense of drama and movement in his music no coincidence, perhaps, as much of this has been written with various forms of music theatre in mind There is, for all Peyton Jones's rumbustious vigour (at times reminiscent of the rude health displayed by Nyman's early Campanello band), a subtlety that only increases over time, in the process achieving a growing cogency *The Only Winner* (1984) is a bold, sombre work in which soprano Mary Phillips provides the glue for some precariously fast tempi By the end of the decade, Peyton Jones is experimenting with vocal phasing (taking Reich into a more orchestrated form) and some static vocal lines — soprano Melanie Pappenheim's rendition of *Going Down* (1989) is a high point, managing to convey a growing sense of panic within an intentionally severe melodic line

But the centrepiece is the title composition Using lines culled from navigation texts, its surface is simple, and as a way to convey (as the composer says) a sense of "space, insecurity and isolation", it works well There are some

sickeningly difficult vocal glissandi to bear early in the piece, but the swell quickly settles The overall effect is of a wistful, longing feeling, Glass-like in the emerging rich harmonies Peyton Jones is clearly a composer whose ear and imagination is open to dynamic possibilities from a range of sources
LOUISE GRAY

Rapoon
Recurring (Dream Circle)
SOLEILMOON SOL11 CD

Somma
Hooked Light Rays
LOW/VERBA CORRIGE LW002 CD

Two further explorations of the treacherous borders of Ambient and Fourth World

Rapoon (zoviet*france ex-pat Robin Storey) continues to explore the terrain mapped on *Dream Circle Recurring*'s disarming and endless sample and synthesizer loops instantly recall the Harold Budd of *White Arcades*, with their deliberate richness But where Budd's minimalism hangs in clear air, Storey's are anchored to subtly, but addictively driving tabla patterns It's music of characteristic deftness, but at times I'm left hankering for a piece to take some leap in a new direction — my attention span's fault I'm sure, not the record's, but there it is — and it's the odd, more distinctly z*f moment (on "Sub-Terran" and "Go-pel", say) which perhaps indicate a more dynamic direction for this music to go in

Hooked Light Rays succeeds in marrying centuries-old music-making rituals with late 20th century recording/reshaping techniques altogether more successfully The basis of the record is the extraordinary singing of the monks of Tibet's Sed Gyued monastery Tibetan singing techniques have been thoroughly documented elsewhere, but the vocal performance here is like no other I've heard, yes, there's mesmerizing throat-singing and heterophonic droning, but when the sleevenotes claim that "in some points it reaches the form of a real singing" they barely hint at how strangely familiar this singing can be (or how beautifully recorded — if this were an ethnographic recording, it would be astonishing in itself)

Still, it's in the post-production where this album's real magic takes place Eraldo Bernocchi and Petulia Mattioli have constructed a tapestry of very long pieces, with the monks' singing fed through giant echoes and reverbs The slightest vocal phrase is turned into vertiginous droning, elsewhere, hypnotic vocal loops are rudely interrupted by clattering percussion and discordant woodwinds

To this Bill Laswell has added his own mixological adjustments and, at times, deep, deep bass (at its most gorgeous on the album's best piece, the oddly *Metal Box*-goes-Tibet "Fluids Emanation") While it's inevitably difficult to tell where Bernocchi's work ends and Laswell's begins, it certainly has the patina of Laswell's best music Overall, an album of all-too-rare achievement
SIMON HOPKINS

Gastr Del Sol
Upgrade And Afterlife
DRAG CITY DC90 CD

The mercifully prolific guitarist-inventor Jim O'Rourke continues his one-man mission to save the reputation of the world's most overplayed instrument. Lip service is paid elsewhere to the curious intersections of American folk musics and experimental/art music, but O'Rourke has a rare talent for actually *making* music from their congruence. He can summon up what Peter Guralnick has identified as the absolute sense of wonder at first hearing, say, Robert Johnson's recording as a college kid in the 60s — a sense of the music (now horribly ubiquitous, and horribly watered down) as somehow unspeakably alien.

Upgrade And Afterlife continues O'Rourke's ongoing project with David Grubbs. In common with the best US post-rock, this music wears its influences on its sleeve yet remains impossible to pin down. Grubbs's beautifully skewed, minimal acoustic guitar and voice pieces — Kurt Weill as played by a train-hopping hobo with an Arto Lindsay hang-up — pop up between the LaMonte Young organ droning of "Our Exquisite Replica Of Eternity" and the Faust-ish radio mangling of "The Sea Incertain". Elsewhere, "Hello Spiral" nods to both Slint, with its math rock electric guitar comping (and no one records guitar quite as viscerally as O'Rourke) and John McEntire's compelling jazz snare rhythms, then suddenly collapses into cacophonous feedback.

The album somehow crystallizes all this with the closing track, John Fahey's "Dry Bones In The Valley". Fahey's folk-brutalism has rightly been namechecked by the likes of McEntire of late, but here the despair behind the pretty guitar melody is thrown into relief by Tony Conrad's scraping violin lines. It's in the very best tradition of maverick American low/high-brow distinction-scrapping, and worth the price of the CD alone
SIMON HOPKINS

Vernon Reid
Mistaken Identity
EPIC 483 921 CD

Joe Carducci's *Rock And The Pop Narcotic* called the bluff on Vernon Reid's chart-topping Living Colour "All the most bogus features of 'mersh Metal but less rock kick (but more rock crit kick) than the average Michael Schenker Group record"

As usual, Carducci was right Reid's squeaky-clean Metal-lite was dire Reid talked up a storm about the need for a successful black rock band to reclaim Metal for its 'originators' Like Wynton Marsalis, he could play all the PC cards in the deck, but that did not make the music any better

After ten years of platinum success, Vernon Reid is 'unsatisfied' with rock and wants the cross-genre success of such instrumental hits as Weather Report's "Birdland" and Byrne/Eno's *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* The idea that genuine genre-busting is compatible with emulating past 'hits' is a perfect illustration of Reid's pop-star complacency

Mistaken Identity unrolls a series of chugging HipHop beats and blues riffs over which Reid wheedles sub-Van Halen guitar and Don Byron tootles various clarinets "Lightnin'" shows that Reid's idea of rock is to play simplistic blues riffs over a leaden beat (he is a Led Zeppelin fan, after all) There is no tension, no songshape or structure to explode no risk of life, volume, interaction, confessional intimacy No risk, period

The Decoding Society albums demonstrated that Shannon Jackson's turbo-charged drums could force worthwhile guitar from Reid There's nothing here with that kind of edge Reid can buy in the names — John Lee Hooker and Prince Paul and Teo Macero — but he can't buy in what matters rock's collective alchemy, rap's rage of the dispossessed, jazz's abstract audacity This is the smug, airbrushed sound of power and privilege advertorial wallpaper Can I go and listen to my Jef Lee Johnson album now, please?
BEN WATSON

Sand
Ultrasonic Seraphim
UNITED DAIRIES UDOR 2/3 2CD

It was only a matter of time before Sand's cult album *Golem* was resurrected for the 90s This German group were part of a defiantly different strain of 70s Krautrock that included the likes of Xhol, Brainticket, and Brave New World, groups whose startling music was/is overshadowed by the achievements of certain other Krautrockers (you know the names) Compiled by Current 93's David Tibet and Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton, who had direct contact with Sand man Johannes Vester, *Ultrasonic Seraphim* plugs into another level of 70s German progressive music that was raw, unrestricted by fashion and almost pagan in its approach Something magical shimmers in the songs of Sand

Disc one focuses on the official *Golem* album, originally released on the ultra-obscure German Kunstkopf label under the production eye of ex-Tangerine Dream keyboardist and composer Klaus Schulze Here the trio of Vester, Ludwig and Ulrich Papenberg concocted a mixture of pastoral and futuristic anthems that, in lesser skilled hands, would have faded into whimsy Sand's studio magic was based on the principle of avoiding being too clever or complicated

One of the main reasons that Sand's one and only surviving LP was released on Kunstkopf was to promote the label's artificial head sound system, where the sound you heard through your headphones was supposed to be three-dimensional A track such as "Helicopter" was aimed to take full advantage of this new experiment in stereophonic sound shifting Even without the tacky apparatus deemed necessary to hear this track at its best, "Helicopter" is still a stunning experience A whirling of invisible synthesized 'copter blades hovering low, *Apocalypse Now*-style, suddenly taking the shape of a swarm of locusts, their wingbeats and chattering mandibles almost drowning out the strangled vocal accompaniment On "Vulture 2", simple Moog droning is fleshed out by the inclusion of an equally sombre didgeridoo to create a hallucinatory effect of nightmare proportions

On disc two the studio experiments of *Golem* are put on a longer leash and allowed to go walkabout Best listened to in the still of the night, these extensions of Sand's studio work shape into massive dunes of sound Especially impressive are the bleak electronic pumpings of "Power Station" and another version of "Helicopter" that leaves this listener's senses reeling in disbelief

EDWIN POUNCEY

Sandoz
Dark Continent
TOUCH TONE 4 CD

Chris Watson
Stepping Into The Dark
TOUCH TO27 CD

If the anti-Techno lobby ever needed a gift exhibit to advance a case that programming renders musicianship lifeless, then Sandoz (the now regular alias for one-time Cabaret Voltaire man Richard H Kirk) has probably just recorded it.

It's not that the music of *Dark Continent* is particularly gormless, in fact, it's the music's intrinsic qualities which makes the yawnsome kick in the beat all the more tedious The little tin phrase which opens the title track (and the CD) promises much of intrigue, indeed, the first four tracks are all prefaced by a disciplined and ingenious use of sound before the introduction of utterly unfunky metronome rhythm tracks I mean, *why?* Kirk's no fool, on "Orgasmatron" he demonstrates just how effective programmed beats can be when they play hide and seek with the upbeats and downbeats But overall, this is the kind of record that makes you thank God that drum 'n' bass came along

Chris Watson's *Stepping Into The Dark* makes a collection of environmental recordings positively eventful by comparison This is a kind of *National Geographic* supersession the siskins and song thrushes of the Kielder Forest trade licks with the fishing boats of Venezuela, while the dolphins of the Moray Firth seem like they're auditioning for back-up roles on the next Bjork album It's easy to scoff like this, but the purple prosody of the liner notes does give rise to the feeling that Mother Nature is just another musical virtuoso, all ready to tune up and howl "Let's rock" for the likes of Watson and those

harmonia mundi

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Keiji Haino, Natsuki Kido Yuji Katsui
MNS CD MAB0005

KAN MIKAMI
Kan Mikami
Dune 963
PSF CD PSFD72

FRED ANDERSON
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Birdhouse
OKKA CD OD12007

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Joseph Bowie, Luther Thomas, James Emery, John Lindberg, Charles Bobo Shaw
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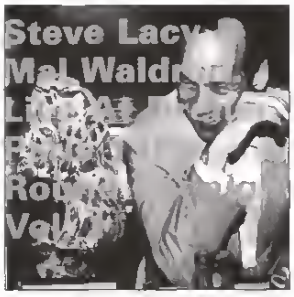
BLACK SAINT CD 120021-2



STEVE LACY & MAL WALDRON
Round Midnight Vol 1
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CLUB DU DISQUE ARABE CD AAA105

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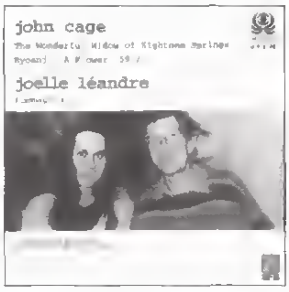

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Microstoria's Markus Popp

Microstoria
_snd
MILLE PLATEAUX MP25 CD

Rancho Relaxo All-Stars
Volume 1: Higiene Mental
DISKO B DB41 CD

Ever since the Third Reich's horrific experimentation with prosthesis, the merging of technology and flesh has had one goal: maximising health and efficiency. Where the vast majority of post-Acid House electronic music imagines a world of shiny, happy people with silicon implants and bionic arms aerobicising their way to corporate-sanctioned bliss, these two releases from two of the best exponents of Techno extremism, Mille Plateaux and Disko B, show that even cyborgs get the blues.

Microstoria (Mouse On Mars's Jan St Werner and Oval's Markus Popp) make resolutely queasy Electronica that is diametrically opposed to Europop's athletic celebrations of the post-human Übermensch. Instead, Microstoria imagine what such a creature, designed only for his or her productive capabilities, might think. The answer, of course, is nothing, or, at least, nothing very articulate — speaking only in binary, the paranoia is hinted at, but never stated. *_snd*'s long chain of painfully slow mute blips and bleeps is the perfect sound of alienation; since we are locked out of the means of understanding this endless stream of techno-babble, *_snd* is the musical embodiment of computer encryption.

The Rancho Relaxo All-Stars, a Transatlantic "electronic supergroup" featuring Americans Kirlian and Stroboscopic and Finland's Mika Vainio and Jimi Tenor, have a slightly less dysfunctional take on Electronica. More helplessly melancholy than uncompromisingly bleak, *Volume 1* uses such post-Chic techniques as placing galvanising hand-claps where they don't belong and 808 drum noises that never get going in a wind-swept, alien soundscape. And just like Chic, the severely ironic cover art — a pisstake of the 'Mom, apple pie and how the West was won' Americana of *Bonanza* — belies, but simultaneously contextualises, the music's message. As the liner notes say: "Good, clean people always know their place. God bless America."

PETER SHAPIRO

who buy his records (and there must be buyers). But fair's fair, Watson's recordings of the River Mara in Kenya by night are of a sonic intensity that beggars belief, and his tape of the change in environment with the sunrise in a Costa Rican rainforest is little short of poetic. Of its kind, then, this is a decent (if a tad overlong) disc, comparable with Alan Lamb's telegraph-wire recordings on Dorobo. But next time, Chris — give those rhesus monkeys some solo space in the mix.

PAUL STUMP

Oumou Sangare
Worotan
WORLD CIRCUIT WCD045 CD

Five years ago it was impossible to go anywhere in Mali and not hear Oumou Sangare's first album *Moussolou*. Despite her status as an outspoken critic of the treatment of women in tradition-bound West Africa, bus drivers never took the tape out of their cassette players, young men couldn't stop talking about her, and boys from Timbuktu to Bamako wore her T-shirts. *Worotan* sounds like a bid to achieve the same iconic status in the West. In the best of all possible worlds, she would succeed handsomely.

Recorded in England, *Worotan* is a breathtaking record — if all World Music fusions were this good, Andy Kershaw would be hosting Radio One's breakfast show instead of Chris Evans. The Western elements (electric bass, violins and funk horns) are subservient to the polyrhythmic logic of the Wassoulou sound of southern Mali. Instead of recreating the schlock of a mid-80s session musician hack job (as is *de rigeur* on most Salif Keita-inspired crossover attempts), Michael Mondesir's sparse bass tremors on "N'Guatu" and "N'Diya Ni" emphasise the angular grooves of Sangare's arrangements. "Baba" and "Fanton Ni Mone", both of which feature horns courtesy of ex-Famous Flame Pee Wee Ellis, are reminiscent of the fiery moments of Guinean supergroup Bembeya Jazz — guitarist Baba Salah seems to want to inherit the mantle of Bembeya's Sekou 'Diamond Fingers' Diabate. Only "Djorolen", a New Age ballad begging for a segue into Kitaro that features Nitin Sawhney on guitar, fails to deliver the entrancing, astringent funk built from oblique but interlocking rhythms that one expects from a Wassoulou record.

Although her group (particularly Salah) have a starring role on *Worotan*, Sangare's voice still shines. Deeper and less keeningly nasal than her contemporaries, Sangare has the most evocative voice of all the Wassoulou singers. It is a bluesy instrument capable of enhancing or soaring above the geometric precision of the group. Less passionate than her debut, and less ghostly than the follow-up, *Ko Siro*, *Worotan* is the meeting ground between the two, and proof that Western capital doesn't have to destroy the glories of African music.

PETER SHAPIRO

Jake Slazenger
Das Ist Ein Groovy Beat, Ja?
WARP CD42 CD

Mike & Rich
Expert Knob Twiddlers
REPHLEX CAT027 CD

As a strange British episode seems to be unfolding at the crossroads between Ambient, Jungle and Easy Listening — you could call it geek beat — Mike Paradinas (aka µ-Ziq, Jake Slazenger, etc) and Richard James (aka Aphex Twin, AFX, etc) are competing to be its Dumb and Dumber. *Das Ist Ein Groovy Beat, Ja?* is the disappointment here, however, with lengthy wallpaper strips of laid-back Electro-grooves and breakbeats. There's a certain amount of license taken with the music, but it's a kind of abstract, tinsel versioning. The tracks are tampered with, but there are no great kicks. The ubiquitous synth lines are purposefully tinny and mouse-like, sometimes with a cartoon quality. At times a kitsch, 60s-style spy theme rears its brassy head, while on the punchier "King Of The Beetz" the King who's *"gonna rock the place"* is given a tootling synth accompaniment, reducing him to Action Man size. But generally, despite titles such as "Hung Like A Bull" and "Come On You Slaz", this is more eezy than cheezy, with a bluesy, Hammond organ tenor surfacing throughout. The playground does begin to seem a bit pointless — wallpapering bedrooms with the faded patterns of black dancers. It's end-of-history music. A testimony to gently filled wads of waking hours — the album's 12 tracks run to 73 minutes — where attentiveness is soothed away by cut-out melodies over clockwork beats.

However, when Mike joins forces with Rich, a gutsier mischief gets underway. The album was actually cut in 1994 but delayed in the pipeline at James's Rephlex label. One can imagine them smirking and goading each other on as they broke through the taste barrier — the cover pastes their faces onto a parodic photo of a kids' boardgame.

James has already carved his own eccentric path, fusing Ambient with a

more freaky, abrasive and visceral range of noises The approach here seems to be one of building up a series of haphazard constellations — a sampled slice of rhythm from the Easy Listening bin (boogaloo, Latin, jazz) conjoined with tentacles of sparse Acidic synth which worm their way through, like a Muzak virus The trick is to layer on the inappropriate sounds without getting muddy — the musical equivalent of keeping a straight face The album follows a downward arc from the punchy Electro-funk hybrid of "Mr Frosty", taking more liberties and hostages as it goes along "Giant Deflating Football" mixes a ponderous big band sound with a clipped, reggae guitar fill and then adds what might be the sound of a rubbed microphone On "Upright Kangaroo", burps and panting punctuate the bouncy breakbeats and doodling, squibby synth Finally, with "bu bu ba ba" there is a quavery voice with barely suppressed giggles going *"bu-bu-bu"* in mock samba style over a sugary, meandering, Wimpy Bar Muzak The track, not surprisingly, ends in laughter, but it's a joke that's easy to share Hopefully, there's life in cheeseville yet

MATT FFYTCHE

Spleen
Soundtrack To Spleen

SWARF FINGER SF006 CD

Taking its lead from Barry Adamson's — or possibly Portishead's — soundtracks for imaginary films, there is much to recommend Spleen's unsettlingly atmospheric debut No doubt some will focus most heavily on the presence of PJ Harvey (Rob Ellis, the heart of Spleen, is/was sometime drummer for Laika and Harvey's group), and maybe construe some reasons for her current involvement in off-the-wall projects (her collaborative album with John Parish, also present here, follows in September) Fair enough Polly Jean has some characteristically dark and psychotic moments to contribute, but *Spleen*'s humours go well beyond this

For Ellis, a multi-instrumentalist with a deftly trained compositional talent, this *faux*-soundtrack is something of a labour of love Recorded between 1992-96, it describes — in disturbing detail — a chemically-infused and crazy love triangle in tones which range from freeform jazz to lurid parlour music The net result leaves the listener with the uneasy feeling of eavesdropping on events that should, for reasons of emotional continence, be kept private There are some Beefheart influences, some Lounge Lizard touches, and the music is idiosyncratically and imaginatively orchestrated

By appending 'soundtrack' to the title, Ellis seems to suggest that the music, by itself, is incomplete It isn't — as, hopefully, subsequent Spleen projects will show

LOUISE GRAY

Spontaneous Music Ensemble
Hot And Cold Heroes (1980-91)

EMANEM 4008 CD

Gary Smith & John Stevens
Gary Smith & John Stevens

ECSTATIC PEACE 52/SOUL STATIC SOUND 9 CD

Although I love the sounds of things used and abused and, by necessity plugged into the mains, there are times during my technirvana when I crave the respite of some earthy acoustic noise And with this particular line-up of John Stevens's Spontaneous Music Ensemble I get it With guitarist Roger Smith and violinist Nigel Coombes on board, the SME developed a cracked, pungent character, rather like freshly-crushed peppercorns Coombes either traced glistening, spidery phrases or cracked hillbilly hoedown, while Smith's guitar sounds were so closely clipped — almost brittle — you'd think he was playing ukulele (imagine, free music's answer to George Formby) Stevens, back on his small kit after lugging around full sized traps in his larger group projects like Away and The John Stevens Dance Orchestra, developed a richly expressive percussive Esperanto from from what might have otherwise passed for the sound of someone rattling around in an understairs broom cupboard

Hot And Cold Heroes makes me miss them all the more The earliest of the five improvisations here was recorded chez Stevens in 1980 the rest are front row recordings from an unusually prolific period of gigging (three performances in four months) during 1991 On one, with clarinettist John Rangecroft and flautist Neil Metcalfe guesting, they veer between shifting drone-tones and more animated, conversational exchanges (Stevens's rather primal trumpeting sounds better for the company of other wind players) The jewel belongs, however, to the trio alone streak-line harmonics on Martin Davidson's basic but finely focused Music Box recording and, at 16 minutes in, the pin-sharp glint of light generated by Coombes's beautifully haunting arco brushing the fine hairs of audibility This is another great dip into the archives from Davidson's reactivated Emanem label The rather fusty-looking package is another of the label's trademarks, so don't be put off

Fate decreed, with Stevens's sudden, tragic death, that his duets with guitarist Gary Smith would appear posthumously More's the pity, for the idea of twinning up Stevens with some younger axe-slingers who'd cut their musical teeth on rock could have produced some challenging partnerships Stevens wasn't averse to such collusion, his mid-to-late 1970s combo Away was a kind of jazz rock fission, whose collective rolling and tumbling was more conventionally directed Smith and Stevens's seven spars share something of a similar feel, although their improvising — like the SME's — is without fixed frames of reference Stevens's playing here is muscular and extrovert but never domineering Smith's sliding motifs, working repeatedly up and down the neck in a see-sawing fashion, appear rather samey on the surface, but progressively reveal themselves as parts of a finely honed and developed polyphonic attack. Smith likes displacing the sound around the stereo (listening back on headphones is a definite plus) Derek Bailey was up to something similar back in the early 1970s, but Smith's use of varying density and decay has a different stamp on it, one that's more closely associated with contemporary blues Stevens blows a few minutes' trumpet but the playing works best when Smith's guitar has the propulsive flux of sticks on skins to twine itself in, through and around

DAVID ILIC

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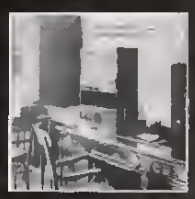
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Spring Heel Jack
68 Million Shades
ISLAND/TRADE 2 TRD 1000 CD/MC/LP

Spring Heel Jack
Versions
ISLAND/TRADE 2 TRD 1001 CD/MC/LP

Drum 'n' bass without a home to go to, smothered in a cosy eiderdown of not-so-toothsome tunes. Why SHJ? Well here they are anyway, with a big deal and an album which will sell. But stick the key in the ignition, turn and nothing happens. Click. It just doesn't fire. Something is missing from the equation, call it 'soul', call it whatever, but these albums just won't get up and walk.

SHJ made their splash last year with the catchy "Lee Perry" and the ho-hum *There Are Strings*. Their current music has, to give it its due, a sound of its own which is a long way from the noxious revelry of jazzy d 'n' b-lite, taking its cue from more militant beats but laying dreamy Techno-pop on top. Sure, the boys can make a drum sound good, but these two releases are almost spectacularly unengaging, missing out altogether on the critical drum 'n' bass bliss/paranoia fault line. Destined for overground exposure on the back of the unpleasant "Walking Wounded" adventure with Everything But The Girl, *68 Million Shades* will no doubt be rattling round the breeze-block cells of student accommodation in months to come. It's a vast improvement on the sounds that would have graced such residences a few years back — EBTG uncut — but it ain't a patch on the dread-filled charge of the real thing (yes, what might be called 'underground' can still lay claim to a sort of authenticity) or its more mischievous offspring Squarepusher, Plug, *et al*. There are passing moments where the percussion is seductive, but the prissy poptronica used to season the broth simply washes such moments away.

Versions, a collection of spacey remixes, applies dub techniques (yawn) to SHJ material. But where Jungle picked up on the thunder and silence of 1970s dub, and was too surprising to need dubbing up any further, these pieces are mere head-nodders, deploying a familiar battery of sounds, devoid of shock. In a way, we can be thankful that OK-ish major label records with an eye to the mainstream are even this good, but there's too much else going on for them to be worth more than cursory attention.

WILL MONTGOMERY

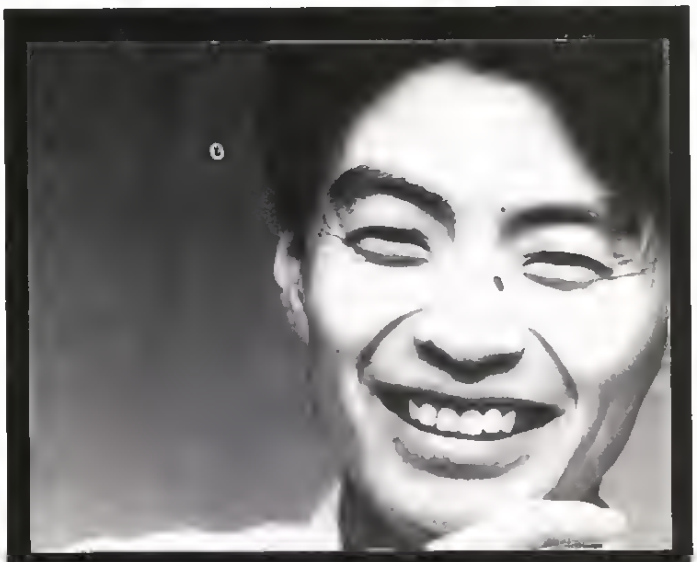
Tactile
Inscape
SENTRAX SNTX 3003 CD

Final
2
SENTRAX SNTX 3001 CD

John Everall's mysterious Sentrax label specialises in submerging 90s Electronica in layers of Industrial noise. Everall's own Tactile project (where he is joined by Teresa Mills and Dael Walker) turns away from polite ambience in order to embrace a series of high-pitched sound waves and lapping electric currents with all the impact of a technological weapons system. Tactile's approach is similar to that of early Throbbing Gristle and Coil, who would plug into darkness and send out the occasional shaft of blinding brilliance. In the same fashion, Tactile have discovered the secret of constructing impressive sound sculptures in the shadows. The accompanying sleevenotes feature psychologist James Hillman and *Wind In The Willows* author Kenneth Grahame reflecting on the prevailing mythology of the Greek god Pan. *Inscape* is probably best listened to at noon, and at full volume, so that the total impact of this electronic Pan-hymn can be realised as a genuinely awesome and unsettling experience, evoking feelings of power and primitivism.

Its companion is also closely related. Justin Broadrick's Final project steps in a completely different direction to the work he has done with Godflesh and Techno Animal. Like *Inscape*, *2* is ceremonial, forbidding and demonic — the crudely-typed track listing, made up of symbols, commas, dots and lines, takes on the appearance of some secret spell. If this is a grimoire in CD format then its full effect can only be felt by devoting some serious uninterrupted listening time so that the musical conjurations of Broadrick can do their work. This particular take on contemporary electronics is an interesting one, and hopefully indicates the direction in which Sentrax will be guiding future releases. A serious magical label that deals with the full range of altered states is to be welcomed. Don't be afraid of the dark.

EDWIN POUNCEY



Seigen Ono
NekonoTopia NekonoMania
MADE TO MEASURE MTM 29 CD

This is not a new album, but a bunch of typically crisp tapes made by Ono, the itinerant Japanese producer/composer, in the late 80s. Of the 16 tracks, seven are short ensemble tunes (one of which is an alternate take) and two are different versions of a piano piece, "I Think Of You" — one by Evan Lurie and one by the composer. The remainder are longer multi-tracked solo pieces featuring Ono's guitar, charango and synthesizer playing, as beautifully recorded as you would expect from someone who began his career as a star engineer. On the series of four "Berliner Nächte" tracks, he weaves swathes of repeat echo around systems-style 12-string phrases. Rather than recreate the degenerative sounds beloved of the generation that grew up wishing they had an original WEM Copycat, he makes a virtue of the clarity of his digital effects.

Ono's guest performers, including John Zorn, Bobby Previte, Tomohiro Yahiro and Jill Jaffe, give the album some necessary bite. Ono uses them like a good jazz composer and is quite happy to keep out of their way when necessary. I only wish he had made some of the pieces a little longer, particularly "Enishie", with its interweaving overdubbed altos. Duke Ellington once said that to write for a musician you have to know how he plays poker. I imagine that Ono knows most of the games played by Zorn, whose restrained, Paul Desmond-like stylings on the opening "A Person And The Photography" are a pleasure, as are the deliciously deferred explosions of more typical Zorn improv.

"Caramba" is driven along nicely by Previte, violinist Jaffe and cellist Maxine Neuman like a swig of Mahavishnu-lite (the most flavoursome kind). The rhythmic playing, on an assortment of Latin-influenced tracks, is pretty good throughout. My only quibble is that the album feels like a round-up of unreleased material, not necessarily a bad thing, but somehow lacking the urgency of a brand new record. That doesn't stop *NekonoTopia NekonoMania* being a good buy. Recommended.

JOHN L WALTERS

David Torn
What Means Solid, Traveller?
CMP 1012 CD

Guitarist Tom is displaying the hyperactivity of all those either on a roll or

an a one-way ticket to hell This latest CMP set is the work of a musician most definitely on the roll of his career The sheer swagger and assurance of the music, from the instant that the yobbo rifferama of the opening "Spell Breaks With The Weather" gatecrashes with a banshee howl into an ominous overture of sleeping dinosaur growls and moans, is infectiously impressive

Ulmer and Sharrock comparisons just don't count here anymore, the fastidiousness of Torn's playing, even when he's ripping out the most grotesque row, is amazing — witness the care he takes over serrating the sound of even his quietest moments There's an icy and transparent beauty about the album, to the extent that the digital blaze of the production sounds curiously warm

If there must be a criticism, it's that Torn, transfixed by the sudden luminosity of his inspiration, tries a little too hard to deconstruct and reconstruct the rock guitar in just 65 minutes' worth of CD In the first four tracks, chords, arpeggios, solos and slide techniques are all given the Torn treatment

It's perhaps wrong to posit Torn as a revolutionary, most of his manifesto has been heard before, elsewhere But the spirit in which he showcases his gifts and the sense of missionary zeal informing much of his work do mark him down as something unique

PAUL STUMP

King Tubby & Prince Jammy

Dub Gone 2 Crazy

BLOOD AND FIRE BAF D13 CD/LP

One thing which makes these pioneering Jamaican dub tracks from 1975-79 so outstanding is their sense of an outcome unknown in advance, probably even to their creators This sense of improvisatory alertness, of having to find an immediate solution, makes them sound still fresh and alive today A microscope is applied to a particular part of the mix, blows it out of all proportion and then pulls it back, revealing it to be merely an element of a much greater set of changes and relationships The fact that it all takes place in real-time adds tangible levels of adrenalin Tunes such as "Dub Of Rights", "The Poor Barber" and "In Fine Style" opt for maximum disruption to the basic rhythm, showers of rimshots cut across the beat, giant thunderclaps of spring-reverb, the mix twisting and bulging around cyclical hi-hat patterns They exist at a moment where virtual chaos coexists with an intuitive sense of dramatic logic, combing fragments into electrifying narratives The other factor which gives these tracks such power, too often neglected, is the fantastic instrumental playing on the rhythm tracks On mixes like "Higher Ranking", "Breaking Up Dubwise" and "Channel One Under Heavy Manners", the producers are careful to allow the rhythm section to speak a little more freely, and the FX are less dramatic, serving a more decorative function But even here harmony and songform are virtually abandoned, and little remains of the original tunes but the occasional ghost of a melody, the relic of a horn arrangement And all these tracks are relics, too, fractured remains of a pop music whose unique social and technological circumstances are long gone Even collected together on this smart compilation they remain glimpses and refractions rather than comprehensive documents a sense of fragmentation which seems entirely appropriate

While it is nice to have these archaeologies, let's not forget that such neatness and clarity was not in any way where this pragmatic, functional, ad hoc music came from or what it was really about The dark spaces and intrigues at the centre of these tracks speak of a very different set of priorities

RICHARD SCOTT

Two Lone Swordsmen

The Fifth Mission

EMISSIONS SOP 009 2CD

From a Sabre to a Swordsman, infamous Club DJ, remixer and producer Andrew Weatherall has re-monikered in order to announce his conversion to a different way of life *The Fifth Mission* is audio fallout the sound of ashes floating through the air after the Big Bang has been and gone After spending much of this decade and some of the last with his head in the drug exhaust of Techno and rock 'n' roll, while managing to produce modern club classics, Weatherall "has jacked it all in" for something far more sober

We might describe *The Fifth Mission* as a post-Ambient double CD set, produced in partnership with engineer Keith Tinniswood Weatherall's new religion follows a mid-paced code His long-standing involvement with breakbeats, dub and electronic melody is still in place, but while there's plenty of space and studio tricks there's no vocal anywhere and the mood remains distinctly subdued and contemplative throughout Similarly, his ability to mix disparate sounds and styles remains impressive, but that old foe of the talented over-indulgence — puts in an unwelcome appearance Some of *The Fifth Mission*, notably "Rico's Helly", sounds like Prince at his most tiresome (ie when he's recording muso instrumentals)

It was inevitable that Weatherall would have to rein-in the breakneck pace of his pre-Swordsmen life, but such momentum allowed him to produce truly great music The Swordsmen lack that urge to grab you around the neck with a dirty great hook and blurt in your ear "Oi! This is fucking good innit?" To play with Weatherall's names — the Sword may not be as mighty as the Sabre

JAKE BARNES

Various Artists

Altered Beats Assassin Knowledges Of The Remanipulated

AXIOM (IMPORT) 162 531 046 CD

Altered Beats is producer, bassist, *agent provocateur* Bill Laswell's most direct confrontation with the logic of HipHop Although most of his material since the mid-80s has implicitly used HipHop's collage aesthetic as the genesis of a series of corollaries about rhythm, *Altered Beats* features his most explicit use of beat-driven juxtaposition, sampling and, particularly, scratching as tools for his mannered exegesis of the funk.

Rhythm is an intellectual exercise for Laswell and, unsurprisingly, *Altered Beats* focuses on scratching — the most mentally satisfying aspect of HipHop As a literal and figurative re-ordering of instrumentation, sound and cultural product, the technique of scratching is a deconstructionist's wet dream Without the performance-based imperative to shake butts, however, scratching can be

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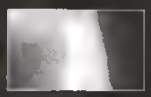

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david cunningham
the interface of voices
electronics and minimal song

FORTHCOMING
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greaves, cunningham
john greaves and david cunningham
songs about duchamps and love,
magic and mountains

pure muso virtuosity — they'll probably start teaching a course in transformer scratching and cross-fading at Boston's Berklee School of Music soon DJ Q-Bert's "One-Legged Centipede" and Invisible Scratch Pickles's "Invasion of The Octopus People" are both outrageously flashy examples of acrobatic turntable manipulation, but they are as dull to listen to as Larry Coryell or Al DiMeola sprinting up and down their fretboards

New Kingdom's eerie "Return Of The Black Falcon", Rob Swift — whose "Ancient Style" attempts to authenticate HipHop's kung fu fixation by incorporating Chinese opera vocals, bells and gongs, and DXT (aka DJ Grandmixer DST) fare better DXT's "Embryo" (along with "Temporary Power Surge" and the cover of Hendrix's "If Six Was Nine") is part of *Altered Beats*'s undercurrent of commentary on the American militia movement. Of course, HipHop is symptomatic of the same sense of paranoia and millennial angst that has driven Middle America to embrace conspiracy theory wholeheartedly, but Laswell's distance from the genre doesn't (and it should) allow him to explore this fascinating conjoining of polar opposites

Like an unfortunately large proportion of his prodigious output, Laswell's latest instalment of 'systems music', the "Ecstatic Collage System" of *Altered Beats*, comes with a fantastic title that promises the world but delivers only the static atmosphere of a tiny, isolated corner of Greenpoint, Brooklyn Laswell's ideas about deconstruction, collision-fusion and rhythm are brilliant — and you can hear them at work on *Altered Beats* — but they are ultimately too strategic, too cerebral to work on any level other than as a schematic diagram of funk's internal workings

PETER SHAPIRO

Various Artists
Century XXI UK A-M
NEW TONE NT 6750 2 CD

Various Artists
Century XXI UK N-Z
NEW TONE NT 6751 2 CD

New Tone's *Century XXI* series began with *Electronics USA 1* which featured contributions from Nicolas Collins, Ben Neill, composer/critic Kyle Gann and Mikel Rouse The Italian label now turns its attention to the UK, using the alphabet, in a Peter Greenaway-ish fashion, to organise its information The extremes of *A-M* include Icebreaker, with a rough live recording of "Re-Mix", a good, stomping piece by Steve Martland, and "The Swim", Laurence Crane's severely minimal (not minimalist) piece for slowly overlapping electric organ lines From the Factory album of the same name there's "Flak", a fine example of Graham Fitkin's crispy romanticism, and there is a long electronic sketch by Orlando Gough, made with John Lunn

Electronics dominate both these albums, but often for practical reasons rather than aesthetic ones Gough is clearly dying to get his hands on larger forces, so to hear him really flex his orchestral muscles you have to turn to a big, well-funded recording project such as the *People's Century* soundtrack, or his forthcoming BMG album

N-Z includes "Oppenheimer", Jocelyn Pook's eerie dance piece for O Vertigo Danse in Montreal, and a typically opaque vocal workout from Glyn Perrin, following the studio tricks he has explored with "Blot" and "B-B-B-Berlin" In case you were tempted to put a 'school' or 'movement' bracket into place, Perrin's piece sounds nothing like Lost Jockey, nor does Andrew Poppy's "Poems & Toccatas No 10" (from his excellent album *Recordings*) Jeremy Peyton Jones's Regular Music II weighs in with a dramatic performance of "Deadwood", with Pook, Steve Buckley and Charles Hayward in the rank and file

The alphabetical system starts to strain a little at Q, which is for a Coleridge quotation, followed by S for Howard Skempton, T for John sTanley and "U is for *Unknown Public*, *The Wire*, *EST*, *New Notes* some British magazines with pages dedicated to contemporary new music Read them " These Italians — such taste!

If there's any linking theme in the CDs, other than the UK origins of the material, it's a certain lack of funkiness Improvised flair is minimal, or minimalist Is that how the Italians see the British — like characters in a Peter Greenaway film? Funnily enough, though not as hilarious as you might expect, the piece with the most blowing in it is the odd couple of Peter Brotzmann and Evan Parker squealing arhythmically over Michael Nyman's "Waltz in F", a David Cunningham production from 19B2

The compilers of the *XXI* series (Japan next) claim that "as a new millennium approaches, a new sensibility is emerging in contemporary music" Sorry, chaps, but I don't believe this millennial rhetoric A new sensibility is always emerging somewhere in contemporary music, whatever the dateline The difficult part is getting to hear it, so these CDs are a welcome addition to the library

JOHN L WALTERS

Various Artists
Musique's Action 2
VAND OEUVRE 9509 CD

The Vandoeuvre-les-Nancy New Music scene is the most vibrant in France, yet still largely unknown here It brings together free improvisors, avant rockers, electroacousticians, even enlightened classical performers Their showcase event, held at the Centre Culturel Andre Malraux (CCAM), is the annual Musique Action festival (now in its 13th year) which involves those associated with the local scene, plus invited innovators from around the globe CCAM also boasts a popular recording studio and is home to two labels (Vand'Oeuvre and 33REVPERMI) dedicated to promoting experimental musics So, why haven't we got a place like this over here? Answers, please, to the Arts Council of England

Musique's Action 2 (volume one was a selection of festival highlights) comprises seven solo multitrack compositions, five were recorded at CCAM by Nancy scene members First up, though, is Jim O'Rourke's "Antithese", a mysterious work that begins with looped Renaissance recorders and churchy organ, suddenly explodes into clashing, hard rock guitar chords, then concludes with some brooding, chiaroscuro electronics — the sacred and profane concisely and intriguingly juxtaposed Other highlights are two percussion-based pieces by Daniel Koskowitz (Soixante Etages, Etage 34, Idiome 123B) and Lê Quan Ninh (Open Paper Tree, Idiome 123B) Koskowitz combines the thunder of avant rock drumming with what sounds like the shrill pitches of gagaku sho flutes, Lê Quan Ninh's crisply executed "Not Want To Say Anything About FZ" (FZ presumably being Frank Zappa) recalls the percussion of Varese, while triggering rapid-fire squiggles of synth and marimba, the kind that populate most of Zappa's Synclavier pieces Elsewhere, there are collage/*concrete* works by Jerome Noetinger, Dominique Petitgand and a rather jolly dance piece by Italian turntables/CDs/tapes composer Massimo Simonini But if you enjoyed Frederic Le Junter's recent album with Pierre Berthet (also on Vand'Oeuvre), then you'll love "Jerrican", featuring Le Junter's gruff vocals and homemade 'low grade' instruments The ugly beauty of his wonderfully eccentric soundworld simply outshines everything else on this disc

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Various Artists
Unknown Deutschland The Krautrock Archive Volume 1
VIRGIN CDOVD 468 CD

Time has bestowed on Krautrock some very specific expectations For a German music to travel in the early 70s it had to be sonically weird, heavily wired for electronics and/or possessed of an amphetamined monomaniac rhythmic intensity By and large, the groups that comprised the jewelled crust of Krautrock satisfied the requirements, but the burn-out rate was inevitably high and their creative flowering was mostly shortlived, causing fans addicted to the stuff to plough through the crud beneath the crust for any kind of hit

At this stage the search is proving surprisingly fruitful It has turned up at least one gem in Sand's *Ultrasonic Seraphim*, and the five extremely obscure Cologne-based groups constituting this first *Unknown Deutschland* volume (recorded between 1972-74) Golem aside, the names themselves aren't promising, suggesting the severely curtailed imaginations of wannabees ignominiously choking on the space dust of the true trailblazers Temple, Cozmic Corridors, Galactic Explorers The only recognisable individuals among them are Temple's Zeus B Held, later a middlebrow producer of Eurodross, and a certain Herr Orridge, who has a writing credit on Golem's "Orion Awakes"

But perhaps their obscurity is a blessing The path from the cosmic garage to the Cologne art galleries, where most of these groups flamed

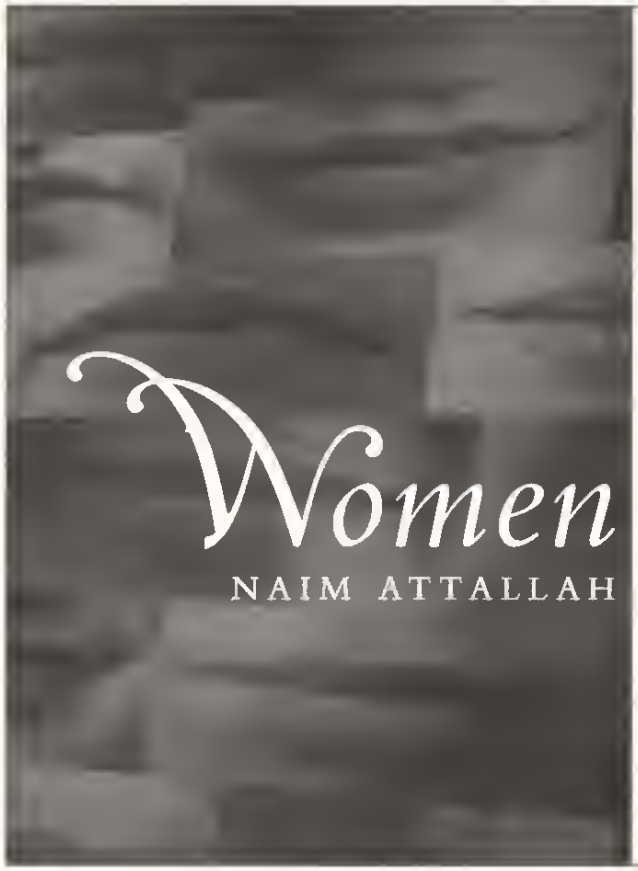

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PHOTO DEAN BELCHER

Bim Sherman
Miracle
MANTRA MNT CD 1004 CD

A trip through the mind and times, the hopes and tears, the hymns and blues of regal reggae vocalist Bim Sherman. *Miracle* is — out of the blue — a clean, clear exemplar of how to get a transcendental result using the barest means.

Executive producer Adrian Sherwood, praise the angel of creative detours, has resisted the temptation to shroud Sherman in the customary On-U Sound swathe of dub-dappled soundmurk: once ethereal and strange, this has recently sounded stolid — a repeater shot we've all grown all-too-accustomed to. Dub should not be like that — it should be like the Zen master's clout round the head with a staff, something that whacks your grown-sleepy perception of music out of kilter, wakes up your snoozing ear

All the fuzz and fashion has been scourged from *Miracle*. It's simple as can be — just Skip McDonald's acoustic guitar, Talvin Singh on tablas, and the initially odd accompaniment of Bombay's Studio Beats Orchestra It mixes up World Musics without succumbing to the idea that punty = authenticity = better Too many cross-pollination experiments end up and and completely SOULless Original uncut scratchy homemade instruments plucked in the middle of the Atlas mountains can beam one in to global vibe far more than all those Bill Laswell pile-ups So here, Sherman's quiet storm of a voice, framed by the swaying mirage of the unfamiliar Eastern orchestration, somehow contrives to rehouse the spirit of Old School roots while sounding like music from the day after the first morning of the 21st century

Miracle isn't so much 'Old School' as primal, timeless. OK, under the analytical microscope (and in a nitpicky mood) you might have to concede that lyrically, *Miracle* won't win any awards for lexical innovation; but that really isn't the point. This is an unashamedly Utopian projection, and Sherman's quiet-storm power as a vocalist means that you're prepared to take (his) every word — and Everyword — on account. His song is pulled directly from the heart — as water from a well, sustenance from the hidden core — and it's more than just a flippant matter of a formal diversion or thematic put-on (as when some so-called 'star' decides their 'next direction' will be 'stripped down' simplicity after a long track record of excess and frippery).

Two of the songs here ("Over The Rainbow" and "Simple Life") are about the most sheerly affecting I have heard for an age Songs like "Rainbow" and "Golden Locks" risk a simplicity which is could have been risible if it weren't so perfectly realised. As with the best old-school Roots/Rasta songs, Sherman takes the everyday observation and weaves a majestic music out of it. The beautiful "Golden Locks" says not much more than its main simple refrain discloses: *"Golden locks, drying my tears/Golden locks, flying at ease/Golden locks, soaking in the rain/Just look at my countenance/Can't you tell I'm a natty dread?"* "Over The Rainbow" likewise couldn't be much simpler (both verge — deliberately? — on childlike, hymnal, Sunday school parable or nursery tale), but is so majestically arranged, so emphatically sung that your soul would have to be dead not to fall in with its burbling wash of sound and sentiment.

What do we think a miracle is? It is not something you lightly name.

Surely it is something unexpected that restores or reveals. Hope was lost — physical or metaphysical — and the miracle returns you to life. a life glimpsed as if for the first time Thus, here, *Miracle* returns "reggae" to an ancient song source, far far (in temporal degree) away. It reawakens it from the parched and stunted domain of fashion and style; it resituates it . . . back beyond R&B echoes, back to a stream somewhere, or a savannah, "in the time of Moses".

What is Sherman's miracle? That it is not spelled out is only natural but the afterglow reverberates throughout these simple songs People have commented recently on how Rasta went "out of fashion" during the 80s, as though a dip of a decade had any real meaning in a larger temporal vision. A thousand years of pain and downpression and ridicule and persecution, and still the face of faith shines brightly, more beautiful for being so hard won and hard maintained: a miracle

IAN PENMAN

brightly and briefly, might have led straight to oblivion, but their respective missions were more than amply fulfilled in a tiny output that is never likely to be fouled by fallout from later, ill-advised reunions (cf *Neu! 4*)

The thrill of this largely generic compilation resides in the groups' single-minded odysseys through space oddity, their pieces fuelled from a foaming milky-way motherlode of analogue synths, spilling feedback, FX and raga guitars The opening Golem track is a wonderfully awry guitar rave Ditto Astral Army's "Interstellar Shortwave", which sounds like a test run for the post-punk German psycho-beat cult group 39 Clocks How you take to Temple and Cosmic Corridors will depend on your tolerance for the dippy half-spoken poetics of Pauline Fund The comp finishes with 30-minutes-plus of cosmic-garage goofing-off from Galactic Explorers and Fuerrote (probably a misspelling of Feuerrote) True to type they don't so much conclude as trail off into nothingness Where they went others followed The next two volumes are eagerly awaited

BIBA KOPF

Various Artists
Unknown Public 7 The Netherlands Connection
UNKNOWN PUBLIC UP07 CD/MC

Though there isn't a distinctive 'Netherlands sound', there is a "Dutch way of doing things", John L Walters argues, in this latest edition of the CD periodical *Unknown Public* Not unexpectedly there's some entertaining material Mark Poysden composes and performs as The Square Root Of Sub (whatever that means) His witty, whimsical "Kettlebirds" is from *Zong*, one of a series of electroacoustic compositions that document the four elements More hilarious is the Dadaist sound poetry of Hugo Ball's "Seepferdchen Und Flugfische" ("Seahorses And Flying Fish"), performed and improvised on by Jaap Blonk "Greig's Old Warhorse" by Jon Rose samples the *Piano Concerto*, taking its cue, maybe, from Eric Morecambe's classic stride piano version with (as he called him) 'Andre Preview' Things get confusing, since the warhorse gets mixed with a game of badminton going on inside the head of Percy Grainger

More direct in its effects is Frances-Marie Uitti's remarkable double-bowed cello improvisation "Double" But the most substantial pieces are the rather acidulous "Kwartet" by Geert van Keulen, at eight minutes, and Maarten Altena's "Slow Motion" at 12 The "Kwartet" sounds like Hindemith on speed, but Altena's spare and minimal work, performed by his nine-piece Ensemble, is haunting and strangely moving

Florentijn Boddendijk's "Hinten Den Scene" is a kind of meta-improvisation "The improvising medium of today is not a jazz band, but a sampler," he argues, and the piece samples jazz solos in a distracting fashion Disturbing in a different way — emotionally if not aurally — is "Le Sacre Du Moment" by Horst Rickels Rickels is a German composer who has lived and studied in the Netherlands, and since the late 7Ds he has been making air-powered installations, with a special interest in "unstable situations" (it says here) His piece is played on Mercurius Wagen, which turns out to be a set of 6D organ pipes blown, with great effort, by two players The effect comes across like an expanded version of Pauline Oliveros's quirky, goblinesque pieces

So what is the Dutch way of doing things? "Pragmatic, relaxed, relatively well-funded and always ready to welcome the new," is John Walters's characterisation Now that *Unknown Public* has won a Prudential Award for the Arts, this description almost fits the periodical itself *The Netherlands Connection* is one of its most rewarding issues to date

ANDY HAMILTON

Various Artists
WrK Compilation (Sound And Phenomena/Conceptual Works)
WRK 004 CD

In 1993 Max Eastley and I were introduced to the fizzling neon and humungous traffic jams of Yokohama by a physicist and sound sculptor named Minoru Sato Before we bulleted off to another city, Mr Sato presented me with number D3 in a limited edition of his soundwork *Unity Sound By M/S — Cantact Electricity Noise* Encased in an exquisite balsa wood box, this comprised five small sheets of technical information, mostly mathematical, and a DAT tape "This work is made the noise of bad contact electricity" instructed the top sheet of paper, and indeed it was 'made the noise', though perhaps sentimentally melodic to bats

Three years had elapsed between the release date of this work and my receipt of the third box, which gives some indication of the marginality of the project. I don't know about coincidence or synchronicity, but last Wednesday I sampled a bit of Mr Sato's crackling, partly because it reminded me of Yokohama neon, and today, Monday, I receive a compilation CD of similar experiments from the same source Spooky

As a conventional CD I would think the compilation may move a little closer to the mainstream than *Contact Electricity Noise* That's closer as in the distance from Earth to Pluto Featuring the work of Atsushi Tominaga, Hiroyuki Iida, Jio Shimizu, Minoru Sato, SASW (Searching A Stationary Wave) and Toshiya Tsunoda, the compilation could be described as the real Japanese noise music.

Real because the works here seem consciously to avoid aspiring to the condition of music They include the sounds of vibrating windows, a magnet attached to a tape head, water dripping into and destroying a loudspeaker, and, most mysterious of all, the vibration of a fence between parking lot and roadway Sort of Edward Hopper without the painting

Freed from the turgid romantic nihilism of Industrial music, these ghost emissions from the technological ultrascape possess a barbarous charm They remind me of Folkways underwater recordings, all hydrophone hum and very little fish About as far from music as you can get, then

DAVID TOOP

Vasara
Ring
PSF PSFD-77 CD

Black Stage
Black Stage
MABO-00S CD

Vasara and Black Stage are two of the group-based incarnations of the irrepressible Japanese multi-instrumentalist Keiji Haino On Vasara's *Ring* he's joined by Kan Mikami (vocals/guitar) and Toshiaki Ishizuka (percussion) The phantom-faced, jet maned man himself is credited on kayagum guitar, three-course shamisen and "tom" While *Ring* is far from one of Haino's more haunting efforts, it's certainly a peculiar mix of disparate elements No sooner does the one long track settle into an ur-ethnic rhythm, punctuated by Mikami's Afro-chant singing, than it's broken apart by a distinctly urban feedback guitar attack. The vocals further shift into Blixa Bargeld shrieks, then into Satchmo croaks, to end up nearer to the blues moans of Howling Wolf The instrumentals similarly collage elements of banjo strumming, wine bar jazz and Noh Theatre angularity The piece gently climaxes on a distant plaintive note gorgeously reminiscent of Haino's Nijiumu recording *Era Of Sad Wings* Multicultural collision at its most unpredictably productive

With Black Stage, Haino takes up flute and harp as well as electric guitars, and is joined by Kido Natsuki on acoustic guitar and Katsui Yuji on electric violin Again there will be a surprise, maybe even a disappointment, here for those fans of Haino's full-power feedback solo improvisations or his work with Fushitsusha While his vocals are as scream-ridden as always, they sometimes here dip to an intimate whisper and, in this modernist atonal company, take on a Viennese *Sprechgesang* edge of stuttering discontinuity

These two Haino releases are far from central to his increasing reputation as one of the authentic wild men of the improvised music world But then again, the concept of centralised linear development is evidently alien to an artist dodging off so tirelessly at so many simultaneous tangents

ROBERT CLARK

Wire
Turns And Strokes
WMO 4 CD

In a book whose title and simplistic thesis (*The Rise And Fall Of Popular Music*) spoil such scholarship as appears in it, the music historian Donald Clarke nonetheless makes one claim with a germ of truth "The tragedy of rock 'n' roll is that it was forced to become more than music"

It would be fun to trace a history of post-SOs pop in terms of the contrast between its actual drives — textual, textural, technological — and the various 'more-than-music' things it on occasion thought it was In such a history, Wire would stand further apart from the rest of punk than they do already, as being a group who from the beginning thought not of rebellion or movement renewal, but entirely in terms of innovation in the realm of 'pure' sound If much of what's core to rock has in fact been just this, ever since Les Paul and Yma Sumac and Sam Phillips and Bo Diddley, almost no one has ever behaved or discussed it as if this were so

Old-timers will recall that on Wire's very first recorded outing ("Lowdown" and "12XU" on EMI's *The Roxy, London, WC2*), rumourmongers claimed that EMI, who had just signed them, must have allowed them to re-record their tracks in the studio, so much better did they sound than Eater, The Unwanted and Johnny Moped, and (more to the point) even than X-Ray Spex and The Buzzcocks Perhaps such rumours helped conceal the fact that Wire *listened* to every single thing they did, at a moment when others just thrashed away Attention to the grain of the sound in even the most primitive of contexts worked for them then, so that it holds up way better now, when a too much recorded punk is held up only by the memory of what its 'more-than-music' once was

Much of *Turns And Strokes* is live, often rough desk-recordings from July 1979, when they toured after recording *154*, to just before their first dissolution in the spring of 19BD some would appear, reworked, in the records individual members made after the split The 16 minute "A Panamanian Craze?" is probably the prize for completists, as it takes the group furthest out of the poised and slippy guitar-slab drone-pop they then favoured on stage It's an extended improv driven by drum machine and strange whistlings, a rehearsal that's never quite focused and never quite dull The notorious version of "12XU" that appears as a fragment in the long-available *Document And Eyewitness* (which this release complements) is here completed, a frenzied parody of the by-then detested original Two reworkings of their 19BD single "Our Swimmer" fill out the collection, the second, "Catapult 3D",

being particularly distressed and clammily playable

Clarke's germ of truth threatens always to become a reactionary epidemic the kind of Jam-fan gibberish that reduces all rock to mere fun, a past pastime we set aside when we reach man's estate Of course it's more than just music even — and perhaps, especially — when it's nothing *but* music, as Wire so potently were.

MARK SINKER

Josef Zawinul
Stories Of The Danube
POINT/PHILIPS 454 143 CD

Django Bates
Good Evening, Here Is The News
ARGO 452 099 CD

After the Doomsday of Deep Purple's *Concerto For Rock Group And Orchestra*, and despite Frank Zappa and Jaz Coleman, it's still prudent to indict jazz and rock musicians who wannabe 'serious' classical composers Here are two cases for the prosecution

Zawinul's album, incredibly, is perhaps marginally the less awful of the two, in spite of Bates's music being a shade more listenable Joe's grotesquely overextended (one hour) tone picture of the Danube from source to sea (natch) is lamely orchestrated and, for him, melodically undernourished to an alarming extent Contrary to received wisdom, Zawinul has utilised harsh musical textures long after his peers rejected them, but they're nowhere to be found in this mood-music mire that would be hard pushed to score a cheap travelogue for Transylvania

Django Bates's grasp of technique and his wiring together of serial and aleatory methods with tonally-based architecture and grabby rhythms, both in the orchestra and in smaller ensembles, should be a winner but isn't, simply because that technique of his always gets in the bloody way As Zawinul throttles his quirky melodies with impressionistic epigonism, so Bates spends an hour telling us in a very loud voice just what a frightfully clever chap he is His liner notes are even worse, resembling the breathless burblings of a pre-school boy writing an essay about a visit to the Village Vanguard or the Two I's Bates's orchestra rants heartlessly, bastardised Bernstein with tiresomely hipster titles ("Maxwell's Yacht", "Ecstasy", "The Dance Thing", etc) Bates is at his best on a small stage, and the string quartet "Pond Life" is fastidious, charming, resourceful and (honest, folks) modest.

We know these guys, especially Zawinul, are mercurially talented We know they've got something to say to us But whenever they try to say it in classical music, will someone please shove them in their joannas, slam down the lids and lock the buggers in?

PAUL STUMP

in brief **critical beats**

Peter Shapiro finds out who's runnin t'ings in clubland

Baby Mammoth 10 000 Years Beneath The Street PORK 035 CD
While the last couple of Pork releases have bordered on the autistic, *10,000 Years Beneath The Street* is less heavily sedated and more engaging Baby Mammoth use the same gelatinous textures of oozing synths and plangent keyboards as Solid Doctor or Fila Brazillia, but the beats are less brittle, the bass approaches Deep House motorvation and the guitar riffs are almost funky The gentle melodicism and Latinate swing of the percussion fills suggest that the Pork posse have put down their spliffs in favour of Prozac

Black Star Liner Haláal Rock EP EXP EXP12008 12" The first half of this EP is pretty standard nouvelle bhangra — post-colonial exotica comprised of tablas and ney samples with unexciting dance beats "Yeboahs Jawz", however, is the true heir to the legacy of the Bombay master RD Burman uptempo Wobble bassline breathtaking Bollywood string crescendo, flamenco guitar and a jaws harp working like a 303 "Dolmush Dobie Dust", meanwhile, is like "Flight Of The Bumblebee" scored for tablas, strings, sarangi and sarod

DJ Die & Suv Get On Down/Out Of Sight V RECORDS V018 12" An interesting response to the more straightforward dynamics of Alex Reece and Moving Shadow "Out Of Sight" has the hallmarks of 'jazzy' drum 'n' bass — flute fanfare, shimmering metallics and a metronomic drum break — but uses the dub technique of drop-out to destabilise things a bit. "Get On Down" is even more rhythmically simplistic, but has enough twists, turns and odd sound effects to rise above the lounge Jungle schmaltz that is currently in vogue

Firefox Mutha F*cka/Glamour Gold Gangsta PHILLY BLUNT PB005 12" This double artist 12" asks which is more scary the pure physical menace of grapeshot snares and bass bombs, or Jungle that moves disarmingly with the smooth elan of Dr Dre Firefox's "Mutha F*cka" (interesting use of the asterix there) is a bleak, bombed-out shell of a Hardstep track with a bassline that is pure fuck-off attitude "Gangsta", meanwhile, is influenced by both Luke Vibert and Ice Cube and rolls as easily as Snoop's low rider Both groove like hell, but Firefox's chopping edits knock the wind out of your chest

Flynn & Flora Bass Speaker/Revolution INDEPENDENT DEALERS PROMO 12" Although it doesn't quite live up to the thrilling violence of its sampled rap, DJ Krust's remix of "Bass Speaker" is a vicious, distended piece of dark HipHop-influenced Jungle that is as hollow and airless as an empty gun chamber "Revolution", on the other hand, manages to combine the melodicism of flutes and the physicality of booming sub-bass and phat breaks without sacrificing any visceral sensation

Mask One Time/**Gang Related** Tear It Up DOPE DRAGON DORAGO11 12" Two Hardstep tracks from Bristol that swagger with gangster lean "One Time" is pure 90s funk — like Lonnie Liston Smith never happened — while "Tear It Up" must have the most overmodulated bassline in the history of recorded music (Luther Campbell eat your heart out) With little detail besides snare shrapnel, seismic bass and a gangsta sample, these two tracks pare HipHop down to its bare essentials, just as HipHop did to funk and disco a generation earlier Although HipHop did its best to replace soul and swing as the guiding values of black music, the logic of the low end has just now superseded everything else

Jeff Mills Live At The Liquid Room — Tokyo REACT 77 CD With the potential to capture glaring miscues and crap mixing, this live mix CD by the most revered of all Techno DJs is dance music's boldest move yet into real-time musicianship Instead of the crass commercialism of rock's double live album, *Live At The Liquid Room* seeks to inject spinning discs with the same aura of energy and risk as a live performance It's an enjoyable listen — Mills is an awesome DJ — but the industrial samba of the drum-heavy Techno is so insistent that nothing else seems to matter, let alone happen

Restless Soul Mama BASEMENT 282 PT14 12" By abandoning their Roland 3D3s and eschewing the skipping hi-hats and diva vocals of Garage, House musicians tried to become 'artists' and lost their advantage over their rockist contemporaries The recent trend of disco cut-up records is their way of recovering the lost sense of immediacy and pure somatic pleasure of dance music With a relentless Salsoul loop and periodic O'Jays-style *"oooh-oooh"* interjections, "Mama" is the funkiest and best of the lot

St Germain Alabama Blues Revisited F COMMUNICATIONS FCD50 12"/CD This remix package of a Deep House classic by French solipsist Ludovic Navarre is evidence of dance music's urge to incorporate 'organic' genres into the mix Garage maestro Todd Edwards turns in the most effective reconstruction with an intriguing fusion of hopping disco exhortations and blues story-telling Is it because so many people seem to think that Michael Franks represents the spirit and aesthetic of jazz that blues moves like this work better than the jazz anthropomorphising of synthesizers perpetrated by most Techno, drum 'n' bass and House? Or is it just the Luddite in all of us?

Sons Of Silence Suited And Booted EP LEAF OOCK 6 12" After the alchemy of "Silence Go Boom!", in which Sons Of Silence try to make Techno out of reggae's base metals, *Suited And Booted* dissolves into the watery grave of generic soundscape With titles like "Silence Go Boom!" (taken from throwaway dialogue from a Truffaut film) and "Murnau", Sons Of

Silence make club music that aspires to the usually anonymous moodiness of film soundtracks

Sureshot Underground Symphony NINEBAR NOZA02 CD Proof that drum 'n' bass is reading its own headlines and getting too big for its breeches A Junglist concept album about the inner city whose reach far extends its grasp, *Underground Symphony* is comprised of stiff breakbeats, cheap, mock-elegaic strings and the misfired irony of cutting up Chic's "Good Times" Although Sureshot has sterile atmospherics in common with that other over-reaching drum 'n' bass conceptualist, T Power, *Underground Symphony*'s main problem is that the beats are as weak as water

Twisted Science Freedom Of Noise EP LEAF DOCK 5 12" If the preponderance of downtempo music is symptomatic of the growing impossibility to articulate anything, this release by Jon Tye represents its horrifying apotheosis From the obliteration of "Clean Your Head"'s escape-velocity BPMs to "Kola Nutt"'s annihilating inertia, Tye tries to speak in every language he knows and finds it impossible to utter anything other than the sheer noise of terror

in brief electronica

Rob Young checks the circuits of the digital underground

Farmers Manual No Backup MEGO MEGO008 CD **Pita** Seven Tons For Free MEGO MEGO009 CD First full-length CDs from this wilfully difficult Vienna label Farmers Manual practise a form of stereo-trepanning on the third track (can't tell the title — the design's too weird) A flickering, Pulsinger-style beat constantly confounds the left- and right-brain patterns Elsewhere, twisted vocal experiments, illogical sonic debris and minimal backwards Techno compete at the peripheries of perception Oh, and that first track's *meant* to sound like that — it's a CD-Plus file On the Pita CD, it just gets stranger it begins with a sampled needle in a lock-groove over an ear-splitting dog-whistle sonority, and reassembles those noises over the ensuing three tracks The other four edge even closer to the limits of utterance Divertingly patience-trying

The Mike Flowers Pops The Freebase Connection LO RECORDINGS LOEP 02 CD/12" Almost a meeting-of-worlds too far, but Lo Recordings' creative interventionism here achieves a disorientating sleight of hand trick, rescuing Flowers from our collective postmodern nightmare and repositioning him amongst cutting edge remix wizards Aphex Twin, Mellowtrons, Luke Vibert and Funki Porcini, while at the same time building on said mixers' open admiration for all the music Flowers apes The slight disappointment that no one quite distorts the available material *enough* — is swiftly brushed aside by the energy pulsing through the mixes, especially Porcini's Junglist hustle and stellar trumpet break Aphex's clattersome "Debase" is his best since "Hangable Auto Bulb"

G-Man Kushti SWIM WM9 CD/LP **Lobe** Lobe SWIM WM10 CD/LP Two offerings from Colin Newman's Swim label, one acerbic and one polite With *Kushti*, an LP's length of acrid, bruising and doggedly unlikeable Hardcore Techno laid down apparently with little or no irony, Gez Varley demonstrates why he should remain on good terms with his partner in LFO, Mark Bell Lobe also fail to impress with a series of abstract(ed), cloying Electro-doodles With humdrum loops, unadulterated synthwash and low-res beats, it's difficult to imagine why anyone would want to release music into the present climate of queasy reconstruction

Tetsu Inoue World Receiver INSTINCT AMB 6002 CD Welcome reappearance by Japanese expat Tetsu, now appearing on a new US imprint. With heavy sound design, he brings out transparent yet delicately layered textures of environmental DATs taped around the world (not very densely populated areas, by the sound of it), plus gorgeous slides/trumpet arrangement reminiscent of Talk Talk ("Health Loop") In these hands, against all expectations, Ambient feels alive again

The Mellowtrons Evacuate CHILL OUT LABEL CHILL 009 CD **Blue** Mexican Church EMISSIONS/SABRES OF

Freefall

Clive Bell plunges through music's protecting veil, and enters the realms of sonic absurdity This month, looking for the perfect Olympic soundtrack

"Hi, you have reached the office of the Atlanta Committee for the 1996 Olympics, the biggest peacetime event in world history Sorry we can't come to the phone right now, but leave your message after the official fanfare and we'll get back to you in record time!"

Hi Bob, this is the Mayor speaking By the way, that fanfare sucks In fact, Bob, we need to have a chat prontissimo about these motherfucking fanfares I just got sent a whole CD of this shit *Summon The Heroes*, for Christsakes Leonard Bernstein, Carl Orff, John Williams, and some orchestra from *Boston*, of all places What *is* it with John Williams? Everything he writes I feel like I'm up to my elbows in popcorn and weeping 'cos ET just died

Listen, Bob I'm reading off the back of this CD "Official Licensed Classical Record Of The Atlanta Committee For The Olympic Games, Inc" Can I just say something here? The Olympics are happening here in Atlanta — I mean *Atlanta*, crime capital numero uno of the United States We got more violent assault, more decapitation per capita than any other city, and I don't see any track on this CD telling it like it is about Atlanta I don't see any piece that says, "Excuse Me, But Atlanta Just Kicked Your Ass" Where's the gangsta rap? Where's the Deathcore medley? "Conquest Of Paradise" by Vangelis — what is this shit?

That's my first point Next, I don't think gays and women are adequately represented on this CD Hah, surprised you there, Bob! You could say nobody is adequately represented except for male 60 year old fanfare writers But check out the original Olympic Games, Bob, in Homer's *Iliad*, right? Achilles organised them as funeral games for his dead partner, Patroclus The prizes included a pregnant mule and some female slaves So don't talk to me about the Olympic spirit, in Atlanta it's called attitude Let's license a track from one of those Queercore bands, God Is My Co-Pilot or whatever Ask John Zorn what's hot right now

You want the listener to appreciate something of the sheer pain and excruciating tedium involved in, say, throwing the hammer? Don't ask Goddamn John Williams — you need a Japanese noise band How about Clitoris Trafficker or Violent Onsen Geisha? OK, now you're getting a *real* Atlanta 96 Olympic CD! Jesus, Bob, there's only one guy on this thing under 40, that's Michael Torke, and he thinks he's Mendelssohn Get him remixed by Aphex Twin and maybe we can hold our heads up again

Another irritant, Bob, is this lame crap in the sleevenotes about "The important thing is not to win but to take part" Puh-leeze! This is the Atlanta Olympics, not the frigging Sunday School egg and spoon race Here we got two rules 1 No blood, no foul, 2 It's not over till the other guys lose

Still with me Bob? What I'm saying is that the Mayor's office wants all copies of *Summon The Heroes* recalled and destroyed There's just time to put together a decent Olympic CD I done some research on my own account, and I see that beach volleyball is featuring for the first time as an Olympic medal sport These two Limey women are coming over as the British beach volleyball team, and one of them, she's called Amanda Glover, works for Hackney Council They tell me Hackney is some kind of British version of Atlanta — I mean, they see an ass, they kick it

So here's what we do We get some real young Britbrat girl band, Bis or Shampoo, whatever, to write a song celebrating beach volleyball, we get Amanda Glover to sing along with them, fly them out here, team them up with George Clinton and Funkadelic Christ Bob, we have to do this Olympic thing the Atlanta way is what I'm saying. □

PARADISE SOP 008 CD Two releases that, like Spacer's recent *Atlas Earth* LP (and many others) hang colourful, 'organic' samples over gently rolling drum patterns. Actually, Lee Walker (aka Mellowtrons) delivers a punchier debut LP than last year's "Rhythmwide" single promised. Immersive HipHop breaks combine with strange interludes drawn from what sound like Deep South soul/gospel preachers in full rhetorical flight. Blue's project sounds similar, with an added attempt to engage in cinematic sweep, but no details emerge sharp enough to leave much of a mental indentation. Ultimately, their preference for tunefulness over texture makes them too easy to ignore.

S.E.T.I. The Geometry Of Night INCOMING! INC!CD 3310 CD **Spooky** Found Sound GENERIC GENRCDJ 001 CD Andrew Lagowski's second album comes plastered with the digital code currently being transmitted in deep space to let alien life know that we primitive lifeforms are here and available for conquest. The 808-ish rhythms are as jaggy as early bitmapping on tracks such as "Cobalt" and "String Theory", while "F1 13" recalls recent Cabaret Voltaire/Sandoz. "Mare Crisium", with what sounds like a sample from an Eastern European Orthodox chorus, actually succeeds best in conveying the solemnity of skywatching. Spooky — the British duo, not the New York DJ — open *Found Sound* with a track that makes you think they've been hitting the gamelan sample CDs, but dig the title — "Central Heating" — clearly they've been doing a little domestic appliance recording. Generally, the whole LP comes across as an interesting if slightly charmless exercise, a touch clinical for repeat play.

Theorem Nano PLUS 8 OS7 CD **Velocette** Sonorities By Starlight REFLECTIVE REFCD 8 CD From the same pedigree and Richie Hawtin's Plastikman, Theorem (aka Dale Lawrence) disappoint by relying heavily on automated composition systems. Funkiness is signified by a lazy Detroit clipping hi-hat over relentless 4/4 rhythms, but the bass drum lacks bite, and the textural overlay sounds like a lift from a 1994 Trance tune. Velocette, on the other hand, take more creative steps to break up Techno's control matrix. "Afterimage" is lit up with detail like the 'copter's-eye views of LA in Michael Mann's *Heat*; "Full Page Ads On Venus" shows what can be done with a 4/4 given a little imagination and a sense of humour. Great cartoon porno sleeve!

Various Artists Alt Frequencies WORM INTERFACE WI007 CD/LP Variable compilation from London's Ambient Soho. Squarepusher seducees will want it for the two Tom Jenkinson contributions, "Vogon & I" and "Happy Little Wilberforce", where he converts the funk energy of his 'Pusher output into a more squared-off Industrial jackhammer approach. Plasma Lamp's "Lounge Lizard" and David Kristian's "OOOHVille" are the other ones to watch here, the record as a whole, though, sounds water-treading rather than agenda-setting.

Various Artists Invisible Soundtracks EP LEAF 12" Six exclusive tracks commissioned from known and unknown quantities. Of the known, Ronnie & Clyde's uptempo sub-Jungle workout contains a luscious repeated fill-roll, while Bedouin Ascent replaces his usual meticulous programming with a heavily-processed harmonium drone. Most evocative — and therefore, most appropriate, given the 'soundtracks' brief — is Richard Thomas's "Muffin Spencer-Devlin", which does for the 60s Hammond what Sun Ra did for the Moog.

in brief **out rock**

Tom Ridge picks up the grit on rock's long and winding road.

Analogue AAD SONIC BUBBLEGUM 027 CD **Lazy Boy** Amnesia TASANKEE RECORDS NO NUMBER CD Analogue begin and end (with the climactic, epic sweep of "Track 12", with its weighty chords and echoing percussion) by sounding like Tortoise wannabes (they're with us already!): pared back instrumentation, dub effects, sinuous basslines. But they soon stamp their own personality all over *AAD*. The sound is more solidly *rock* in leaning and less prone to studio experimentation, but is sufficiently open to incorporate deep, subterranean beats and varying tape speeds. There's an unexpected change about halfway through when some languid vocals and symphonic synth backing momentarily resurrect late-period Joy Division. Lazy Boy, on the other hand, come up with an unremarkable collection of instrumental guitar music. *Amnesia* sets its sights on 'rock-*noir*' moodiness but falls far short of the mark, sounding instead like The Shadows moonlighting in downtown New York.

Cheer-Accident Not A Food PRAVDA RECORDS PR6359 CD **June Of 44** Tropics And Meridians QUARTERSTICK RECORDS QS 44 CD/LP Steve Albini gives Cheer-Accident a typically miked-up, in-your-face recording: we're talking bludgeoning, aggressive stuff here, located somewhere in the middle of the food chain between hardcore and lo-fi. Some of the stop-start rhythms and pounding drumbeats make for bizarre moments of recognition when Cheer-Accident's crunchy sound recalls Led Zeppelin (without the blues and Tolkien flavourings). They also throw in a 'wacky' Zappaesque piece entitled "King Cheezanin" and the cut-up studio exploration of "Evan Had A Shelf Life". June Of 44 are noisier still, with bellowed vocals and chugging rhythm guitars, and one stage further towards a rapprochement with more traditional rock values. Occasionally things gel into a thrilling whole, with crashing chords and pounding surges of sound, but both groups seem in danger of painting themselves into a corner: for all their noise and bluster they don't appear to be going anywhere fast.

Exit Exit CHE IRE 1022 CD **White Winged Moth** I Can See Inside Your House POON VILLAGE PV 04 CD/LP Both of these releases are in effect solo projects grounded in experimental guitar playing. *Exit* is the work of Charles Holmes, consisting of three lengthy drone pieces, recorded without overdubs but edited down to a strict 15 minutes each. All three are fairly jagged and noisy, though lacking the piercing intensity of, say, Total's recent *Tanzmusik Der Renaissance* (see *The Wire* 146). White Winged Moth is guitarist Dean Roberts, of New Zealand's Thela, whose tendency is towards a looser, more organic sound — seemingly formless atmospherics gradually cohere into harder edged guitar drones. Some of this is so laid-back as to approach a sort of subliminal ambience, like having someone tinkering away on their guitar in the corner of the room. It sounds extremely inward-looking and lacking in an anchoring figure or motif, but it is occasionally engaging in its serenity.

Harry Pussy What Was Music SILTBREEZE SB60 CD A mammoth 32 tracks here, anthologising all of Harry Pussy's recordings to date. The 72 minutes' duration feels like a lot longer: splintered freeform guitar, percussion applied in the loosest possible sense, and ear-splitting screams. It's like entering an avant garde heart of darkness, by turns confrontational and alienating. Possibly its only virtue is its sheer lack of compromise. You could clear a room in seconds with what sounds like an approximation of a serial killing performed with machine tools (track 12). Titles such as "Nazi USA", "Youth Problem" and "I Fought The Police" might indicate a certain agit-prop edge to Harry Pussy's material, but you'd still be left guessing once the screaming starts.

Magic Hour Secession 96 TWISTED VILLAGE TW1039 CD Having dispensed with vocals for this release, Magic Hour free themselves from the constraints of song structure and solve the problem of how to integrate their extended guitar workouts into conventional rock modes. Basically this picks up where the 20 minute "Passing Words" (from *Will They Turn You On*) left off. Bookended by the mainly acoustic "Sunset One" and "Sunset Two", Magic Hour fire up and stay airborne for the lengthy "Rosebud" and "Sunrise". In contrast to the prevailing use of space and bare-boned structures by many post-rock groups, Magic Hour concentrate on filling in all possible gaps with chunks of guitar, spiralling noisily upwards with repeated crescendos of sound.

Pitchblende Quartet Gygax! MATADOR OLE 190 CD **The Spiny Anteaters** Current KRANKY KRANK 011 CD Pitchblende Quartet seem intent on overstating the case for 'otherness'. Their lyrics read like blank verse crammed into spaces too small to accommodate them, while the choppy guitars and lurching tempo changes are now over-familiar tools in the alt.rock

canon "Crumbs Of Affection" and the interestingly titled "Romanesque But-Tox" aren't bad, but Pavement have done it all before and better. The Spiny Anteaters also manage to disappoint after the bold strokes of the lengthy title track to *Current*, a multi-part piece with strangely languorous guitars and changing moods and textures — even incorporating Wire's "Lowdown" within its labyrinthine structure. Thereafter attempts at creating fuzzy, swirling walls of noise and mesmerising grooves meet with patchy degrees of success.

Polvo Exploded Drawing TOUCH AND GO TG 162 CD/LP **Tractor Hips** Tractor Hips FRICTION MEDIA FRIC 025 CD Two from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with some common ground principally the shifting time-signatures and busy rhythms of 'math-rock'. Polvo benefit from applying vocals to most of their material and, with this album, sticking to a clear, beefed-up sound. Their lurching riffs are kept fairly tight and focused throughout, "In This Life" sounds positively commercial. They can be quirky when it suits them but not to the extent where it interferes with the general pace of the music. With releases restricted to bite-size mini-albums in the recent past, the full length *Exploded Drawing* doesn't perhaps go the full distance, but generally it holds up well. The debut from Tractor Hips is a more hyperactive affair, where the guitar, bass and drums seem in constant competition as they thrash their way through a largely instrumental set. Messiness soon sets in as the crowded grooves pile up.

Spectrum & Jessamine A Pox On You SPACE AGE RECORDINGS ORBIT 003 CD **Various Artists** The New Atlantis SPACE AGE RECORDINGS ORBIT 004 CD Sonic Boom's own label has so far been a showcase for his early work with Spacemen 3. As pioneering as that music sounds now — there are three intriguing Spacemen rarities on *The New Atlantis* sampler — Sonic's more recent material, in the guise of Spectrum and Experimental Audio Research, shows him to be moving towards an increasingly abstract Ambient music. Taken alone, these excursions can tend too much towards the impressionistic and ethereal, but the collaboration with Seattle's Jessamine produces a more solid foundation on "A Pox On You" and "Radiophonic (Musique Concrete)". *The New Atlantis* also features Jessamine, along with Bowery Electric, whose "Out Of Phase" stomps heavily beside the lighter, drone-based Spectrum and EAR tracks.

Third Eye Foundation In Version LINDA'S STRANGE VACATION LSD04 CD **Ui** Dropplike EP SOUTHERN 12" PROMO The *In Version* project kicks off with an almighty racket, as the sound of apocalyptic drum 'n' bass competes with phased sounds and disembodied voices. This is one of two remix collaborations with fellow travellers AMP, both of which push sonic intensity to the limits with vast, distorted beats, staying just the right side of chaos. The remaining three tracks, with various other collaborators, abandon this beat-driven approach, achieving a more low-level sense of ghostly dislocation. "Way Out Like Dave Bowman" (with Flying Saucer Attack) is not a million miles from Main's *Hz* releases. The Ui 12" is far more rhythm-centred, employing distorted bass riffs, evolving out of disparate studio-generated sounds. These remixes are about resolution, where competing pulses and drones eventually achieve an irresistible rhythmic cohesion which seems to emerge unforced from the various studio treatments.

Union Wireless Saturn Ascension Experiments ELEFANT RECORDS ER 1015 CD **Windsor For The Derby** Calm Hades Front TRANCE SYNDICATE TR46 CD/LP UW go for the full locked bass groove, space-rock approach, but with an underlying warmth — partly due to the use of clarinet, flute and electric piano, contrasting with the twisting basslines and repetitive drumming. At times it's more space-folk than space-rock, particularly when Ben Morris's clear voice is added to the equation. They reach a quiet intensity without recourse to minimalist overkill, particularly on "Flame Out" and "Ten Miles Of Bad Road". Windsor For The Derby take a similar joy in repetition but their sound is more distant and measured, building up layers from ambient machine noise to repeated guitar/percussion patterns. *Calm Hades Front*, produced by Adam Wilzie from Stars Of The Lid, is a more conventional variation on the Lid's sound □

Label distributors & contacts

Further consumer info: labels not named in this column should be available at good specialist retailers such as Rough Trade, These, Piccadilly, Depth Charge, etc. In emergencies, contact likely distributors such as These, Cargo, RTM, Impetus, Recommended, Vital, Harmonia Mundi, SRD, Kudos, etc.

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New music books — read, raved about, roughed up

In this month's books section:
New biogs of three sonic giants: Brian Wilson, John Cage, Miles Davis

Brian Wilson: cool by the pool

The Nearest Faraway Place: Brian Wilson, The Beach Boys & The Southern Californian Experience

By Timothy White

MACMILLAN (HBK £16.99)

This is not a book about music. It will tell you plenty, perhaps more than you ever thought you needed to know, about the history of surfing, the meteorology of the Los Angeles region, the economics of Capitol Records and the development of American car design, but it sheds no light on why "You Still Believe In Me" can turn your spine to jelly and ice. It traces the genealogy of the Wilson family back through several generations, rooting for clues as to what turned backslapping Brian into the haunted visionary who lost his mind in search for sonic perfection, but can only come up with an excess of detail (what the Wilsons ate, for example, on their 1922 migratory train journey from Kansas to California), a fondness for therapy-speak that wouldn't be out of place on *Ricki*; and a disturbing brush with genetic determinism. Only 100 of its 400 pages deal with the years of classic Beach Boys records, that impossibly perfect stretch from "Don't Worry Baby" to "Sail On Sailor", the rest is all contour and detour.

It's also a book impaled on a contradiction it can't solve, since its argument is that the Wilson clan's story is an American paradigm, their trajectory a typical one shared by millions of other ambitious, mobile, striving families seeking the golden good life, and to show this Timothy White evokes — exhaustively — the relevant social histories and cultural contexts, from the mundane flatness of the Midwest life abandoned in favour of California dreaming, to the *Happy Days* innocence of the teenaged 50s. Yet his insistence on the typicality of the tale founders on the sheer uniqueness of the music The Beach Boys went on to produce, those qualities that make their best records so indelibly beautiful, without which they might only retain the kitsch value of Jan & Dean or The Fantastic Baggies. White's diligent research may be able to situate "Surfin'" or "409" in their respective subcultural sociologies, but what good is sociology in the face of the first few bars of "California Girls", or in accounting for the obscure alchemies through which those bars somehow don't jar with the goof-off gee-whizzery of the words that follow? Like so many writers on pop, White can grasp and expound upon the meaning and importance of the lyrics, but The Beach Boys are probably the definitive example of a group whose importance, whose (what the hell) *genius*, resides beyond words, in melodies, arrangements, harmonies and textures. From those, White shies away, outsmarted and helpless.

This failing is compounded by his stylistic adherence to a kind of newsreel prose, forever overviewing, scrupulously detached. There's no sense of himself in the book, no clue as to what his cultural investments are (it's kindest to draw a veil over the fact that he nominates Toad The Wet Sprocket as inheritors of The Beach Boys' sensibility), no hints as to the emotional effect this music has had on him — until, that is, a concluding chapter of acknowledgments characterised by a degree of pent-up, thanking gush which Tom Hanks might reject as excessive. In those final few pages, White at last outs himself as a fan, leaving the reaer to wonder why he stayed so self-effacing, so bloodlessly objective, in the bulk of the book. An injection of passion might have helped him to analyse "Wouldn't It Be Nice" (the greatest song ever written about not yet fucking) or "Caroline No" (the greatest song ever written about having fucked for the last time) with the conviction and intensity their exquisiteness deserves.

I don't want to sound entirely disparaging — there is a fascination in the prehistory White constructs for the group, some incidental details that will lodge permanently in the mind (even a militant atheist like myself has to pause on reading that Carl and Brian prayed together before recording the former's unsurpassable lead vocal on "God Only Knows"), and a pleasing symmetry in the way the heart goes out of the book the moment the light flickers out inside Brian Wilson. But the central enigma of The Beach Boys' career remains unanswered: just how did such sexless, funk-free, white-bread suburbanites create such awesome beauty?

ANDY MEDHURST

John Cage As. . .

By Sam Richards

AMBER LANE PRESS (HBK £16.95)

Maybe Sam Richards, adopting a very personal slant in his set of impressions of John Cage, is right — the composer (if that's the right word) is not a postmodernist at all. At least, his work has little to do with a plurality of styles and rejection of modernism's single line of development. Despite his influence on composers — often diffuse but pervasive — Cage belongs more with the avant garde of the art world, from the Dadaists to the conceptual artists of the 80s and 90s. His brand of extreme subversion is more at home there than in the musical world, in contrast to earlier iconoclasts such as Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Boulez, there will never be mainstream tolerance, let alone

acceptance for JC

Cage embraced paradox with enthusiasm "I have nothing to say," he wrote "I am saying it and that is poetry" "Sounds are all around us If only we had ears to listen, there would be no need for concert halls" (This from someone who continued to write concert-pieces till the day he died) "Beethoven was in error, and his influence has been as extensive as it is lamentable" (a critical judgment by someone who rejected the possibility of criticism) Richards, while not side-stepping these paradoxes, is a sympathiser who believes Cage's position is a coherent one In fact the author, a British composer and writer who now lives in Devon, was one of many followers in the 60s who regarded themselves, as he puts it, as "initiates into a cult"

But Richards's curious thesis is that Cage is actually a modernist, not a postmodernist — since that is how he appeared from his early period of fame in the 60s Richards doesn't really back up this thesis, and some of what he says seems to go against it But he carefully points out the differences between Cage and the movements that have tried to claim him Cage is not New Age "He saw peacefulness of mind as a matter for the mind, not for manipulative music." Nor a Dadaist "There is no angst in Cage" He is not a Zen Buddhist Cage did not follow any Eastern discipline, and there is nothing in Zen Buddhism about art created by chance

There are only two fundamental phases in Cage's career, Richards argues. "The first is when he made sense and the second is when he made nonsense" The change came in the early 50s when Cage first introduced chance operations into composition Richards is interesting on the role of chance, and on how Cage used it as a "discipline" As Cage wrote "My choices consist in choosing what questions to ask." Cage's philosophy of music is well-drawn here Music is "a way of life devoted to sound and silence, the only common denominator of which is rhythm" Richards pertinently comments "Varèse had argued that music is 'organised sound' Cage tried to knock the word 'organised' out of the definition" More elusively, he is a "seeker" not a "finder", meditation, not communication, is the purpose of his work

Cage is, I think, one of those idiot savants who litter modern culture, blundering through to insight, or at least influence, despite their genuine naivety and simplicity (Ornette Coleman, Douanier Rousseau and the philosopher Hilary Putnam also come to mind) He really is fascinated by the sound of burglar alarms going off in the night, or the pattern of cracks in the pavement — a trait which, as the author relates, could be infuriating Sam Richards's book is a personal statement and to some extent a reminiscence, it isn't meant to be a tightly-argued thesis, but rather a series of reflections that circle round its subject. To that extent it works well, and I learned a lot from it

ANDY HAMILTON

'Round About Midnight: A Portrait Of Miles Davis

By Eric Nisenson

DA CAPO (PBK £11 95)

Sloppily written — though hardly any less sloppy than the official Davis autobiography — Eric Nisenson's memoir still has a personal punch He was a confidant of Davis in the late 70s, at a time when the curmudgeon wasn't doing much of any value, and conducted a stack of interviews with a view to doing a life story himself This is a revised edition of his original 1982 book.

Nisenson was apparently dropped by Miles as any kind of companion but it sounds like the author wasn't too cut up about it, having been sent on any number of midnight runs for drugs, six-packs of beer or whatever His souvenir of their friendship has a racy and quite entertaining feel, pacily written and sympathetic without seeming too adulatory But what it mostly tells us is that Davis wasn't a very nice guy, was prone to all sorts of misanthropic behaviour and generally treated women with the utmost disdain — none of which will come as any kind of news to his followers The genius of the man remains in the records and the concert memories, not here

Nisenson has updated with a couple of chapters, but he's not very good on the later records and this isn't a study book anyway It's a portrait of the man, and Nisenson got closer than most

RICHARD COOK

PHOTO NICK WHITE

Miles sticks it to 'em

multi media

Tony Herrington is disrupted by Sabotage's Techno-pranks

What is Sabotage? "Sabotage does not refer to the destruction of important economic and political goods, but rather the impairment of thought-processes conscious to the recipients They are directed, taken out of their daily lives and their environments and are confronted with new elements"

The words come courtesy of Robert Jelinek, and he's not referring to sabotage the act, but Sabotage the art project.

Since 1992, Robert and five accomplices — advertising industry creatives, graphic designers — have been impairing the thought-processes of the citizens of their native Vienna by committing anonymous acts of social disruption in the city's public spaces, planting tiny culture-bombs in piazzas, phone booths, elevators, wash rooms, art galleries Some of these are detailed in the two Sabotage catalogues, via grainy monochrome photographs whose captions give some idea of the Sabotage aesthetic 'Tapes for guided tours in a museum were exchanged for tapes [reporting] thefts of pieces of art' 'In the Management Club in Vienna, microphones were installed in the room The discussions of those present were transmitted into the public' 'In a park, security alarms were put on trees, fences, fountains and sculptures Approaching the alarms set off warning signals or floodlights' 'Internationally renowned DJs were recruited for a Techno event with official invitations But the whole music programme was done by a conditioned 'music box'.'

"The idea of Sabotage acts is to have a confrontation with the audience, the public they don't know if it is a piece of art or who did it," suggests Robert, who has also committed aloof acts of Sabotage inside New York's Statue of Liberty and London Airport (both were shut down briefly as a consequence), as well as in Paris, Chicago, Berlin, Munich

"The difference between Sabotage and other art performers is that we are not in the foreground of the artwork We are always sitting behind, looking at what people are doing with this new element, what we change in the public space The Sabotage project — not the whole concept — started for fun, changing telephone books in telephone booths After four or five Sabotage acts we found a name and the concept for it

"90 per cent of Sabotage actions are illegal," he continues "We don't have permission, but we don't need it. Preparing for Sabotage acts is like planning a bank robbery Before we do the action we go inside to see the context, to see what kind of audience is going into this place, and how we can play with these people and this context Sabotage is not an organisation for violence we don't bomb telephone booths We are more playful action It's nothing more than an art project"

One precedent for Sabotage's aesthetic of disruption is provided by Karl Kraus and Arthur Schutz, who planted bogus pieces of journalism (which they referred to as *grubenhund* pit dog) in the Austrian press at the turn of the century A more contemporary local parallel is the work of Viennese Electronica labels such as Cheap, Mego and Disko B, who obfuscate their already diffuse music with satirical packaging, multiple side-projects, elusive aliases, deathless public utterances

It's appropriate then that Jelinek and his associates have now extended their operations into the area of music production, launching the Sabotage and Craft labels and collaborating on a sequence of obscure releases with such deadpan Techno-pranksters as Patrick Pulsinger, Erdem Tunakan and Gerhard Potuznik (from Cheap), Mego's DJ DSL, and Richard Dorfmeister (of Ninja Tune's Kruder & Dorfmeister)

"We formed the label to find and confront another audience, to have more fun," says Robert. "The whole Sabotage project is like an epidemic, finding different products to disrupt different audiences The label is a new member of Sabotage Communications, fooling DJs and record buyers Every release is a surprise — no one knows what's going on It's like a lucky bag — you don't know what's inside You only know the artist, you don't know the package We invite the artist to make a project, and we do the package for it."

Some examples of Sabotage releases *Handle With Care*, an Extended CD that contained a virus programme which disabled a computer's CD-ROM drive for two hours, *Unreleased*, for which the label apparently produced 1000 different 'covers' crude photostats of well-known musicians pasted to the front of the CD booklet (my copy is 'by' Ice-T), *The Lens Cleaner*, which looked like an internal cleaning system for CD players but actually contained 35 minutes of minimal Techno by Franz Pomassl, Andreas Burger and others "Most record stores sent it back," says Robert referring to *The Lens Cleaner* "There is always a little bit of irritation for the audience"

Sabotage is making connections outside of Vienna, vaulting into hyperspace via collaborations with other self-styled art-guerrilla organisations such as Philadelphia's Critical Art Ensemble (electro-malcontents responsible for the 1994 Autonomedia hypertract *The Electronic Disturbance*), and Etoy, "the first street gang on the data-highway", who claim to hijack unwary Web browsers via a system of key words built into the Net's major search engines and then deposit them at their own Digital Hijack site "This idea appeals to us very much," says Robert, "although the Net is not so good because it is such a big space, it is hard to capture the audience"

Then there is the Prague project. "In every street in Prague there is a big megaphone, 8000 of them, which were used by the Communists for propaganda We want to use the system for a whole day to make a 24 hour programme with DJs, musicians, journalists, something like a free party, but only via the megaphones, so you don't see the artist. You hear the music, but you don't know who it is coming from

"The only people I know who are doing interesting projects like Sabotage is The KLF," Robert concludes "I think it is very funny what they are doing The only difference is, they have money"

To burn ... *Sabotage fax 00 43 1 310 8576*

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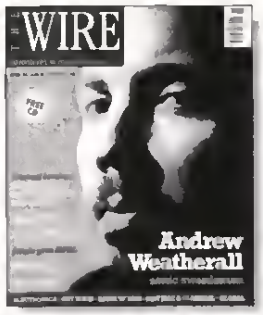

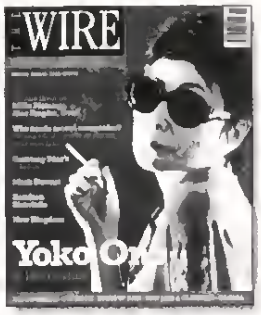

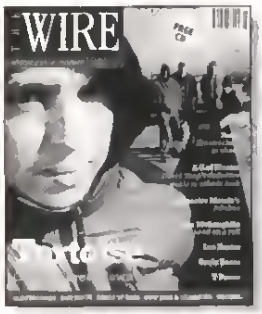

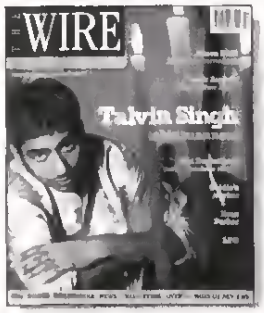

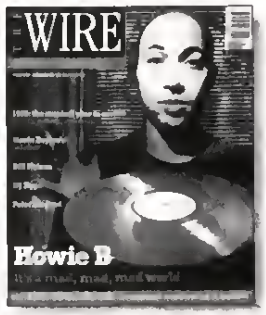

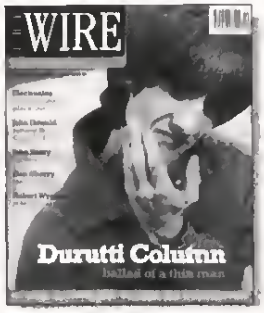

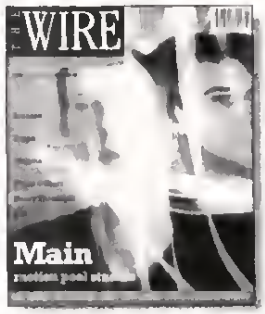

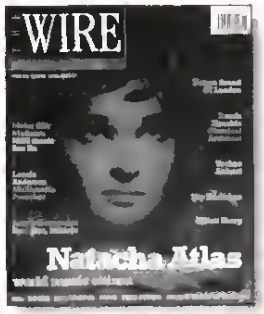

100 **100 Best Records,** Unsung Heroes Steve Lacy David Sanborn Kevin Eubanks Guide to Metal

101 **You Are Here,** Joe Henderson, S Express, Defunkt Sergio Mendes Barry Adamson

102 **Eastern Issue,** Trilok Gurtu, Suns Of Arqa Joi, Pat Metheny Steve Martland Jimmy Witherspoon

103 **The Song & The Dance,** Mel Torme Sinatra vs Costello Mike Westbrook, Schubert Presley Television

104 **Futures & Pasts,** Eno John Cage, Bob Dylan Bob Marley Gerry Mulligan The Orb

105 **Altered States,** Cypress Hill The Shamen Charlie Parker Marley Pt 2 Stockhausen, Reggie Workman, Billy Jenkins

106/7 **Lifestyle, Leisure, Music for Pleasure,** Neneh Cherry, Courtney Pine Olivier Messiaen Abbey Lincoln Albert Ayler Clubland UK Critic's Poll

108 **Visionaries,** Gil Scott-Heron Bill Frisell Faust, Peter Brotzmann Sonic Youth John Cale on LaMonte Young

109 **Serious Pop/Pop Serious,** Living Colour John Adams Anthony Davis Malcolm X Soviet Pop Greil Marcus on Rock Reborn

110 **Censorship,** Ice Cube Ice T John Zorn Metal & Islam Jazz & the BBC Don Byron Coldcut, Ennio Morricone

115 **Overlooked/Underrated,** Ethiopia, Japan New Order Thomas Koner Main Ultramarine Pee Wee Ellis The Pharcyde Teenage Fan Club

117 **The Cocteau Twins,** Al Green Arvo Part Eugene Chadbourne Kippie Moeketsi McKoy Radio 3/Modern Composition Supplement

118/9 **Miles Davis,** The Orioles Wynton Marsalis Fun-da-Mental Roy Ayers Sainkho New Faces for 94 Records of 93

120 **Frank Zappa: The Last Interview,** Kristin Hersh Future Sound Of London Bheki Mseleku James MacMillan Joshua Redman Kim Clarke

121 **Elvis Costello's Jukebox,** Charles Gayle Balanescu Quartet Bark Psychosis Angelique Kidjo Rapon trial Music In 21st Century

122 **Mick Karn,** Tim Buckley Peter Gabriel Steve Albini, Archie Shepp Derek Bailey Disco Inferno Moody Boyz Mexico City Rockers

124 **David Byrne,** Cecil Taylor, Louis Andriessen Berlin Techno Harold Budd Last Poets, Phill Niblock,

133 **Tricky,** A–Z of Prog Rock Part One Allen Ginsberg, Carl Craig Mike Watt Scanner, Elevator Music David S Ware

136 **Natacha Atlas,** MCS meet Sun Ra Laurie Anderson Future Sound Of London Xenakis Kip Hanrahan Techno Animal Jungle Renegades

137 **Main,** Frank Zappa, Magma, Henry Threadgill Scanner, Nana Vasconcelos Pakistan trance music Simon Fisher Turner Bruce Gilbert Sufi

138 **DJ Spooky,** Ry Cooder, Pere Ubu, Master Musicians Of Joujouka 4 Hero Penguin Cafe Orchestra Peter Hammill Musica Transonic Spring Heel Jack

141 **Marc Almond,** Stockhausen Aphex Twin US post-rock Jaz Coleman Wayne Shorter Andrew Poppy

142 **Durutti Column,** John Oswald John Barry Electronica Don Cherry Robert Wyatt's jukebox

143 **Howie B,** 1995 reviewed — charts, quotes opinions Gavin Bryars's jukebox Bill Nelson DJ Hype Peter Blegvad Germ Anthony Manning

144 **Talvin Singh,** Amon Duul II Evan Parker Zappa's Yellow Shark Goldie's jukebox LFO Test Dept, David Shea Rachel's Dr Nerve, Scanner in Montreal

145 **Tortoise,** Faust, A–Z of Electro, Mixmaster Morris's Jukebox John McLaughlin Les Baxter T Power Sonic Boom Thomas Koner Johah Sharp, Ui, FREE Resurgence Records CD

146 **Yoko Ono,** Mille Plateaux, Alec Empire Oval Guide to starting your own record label Courtney Pine Mark Stewart Harrison Birtwistle New Kingdom

147 **Coldcut/Ninja Tune,** Hypersymposium Ronald Shannon Jackson Philip Glass's Jukebox Jaki Liebezeit, Negativland, Rhys Chatham Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Photek

148 **Andrew Weatherall,** Contract breakers Mad Professor Meat Beat Manifesto, Jungle goes AWOL B08 State Ravi Shankar FREE Big Cat CD

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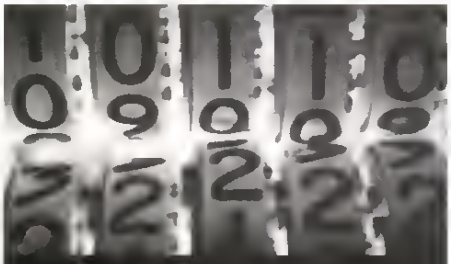

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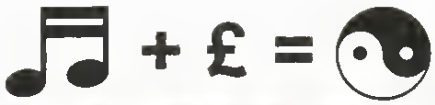

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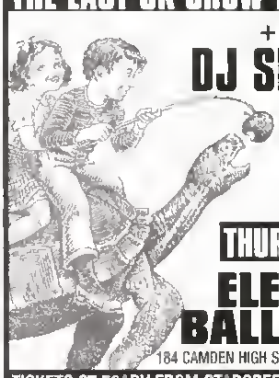

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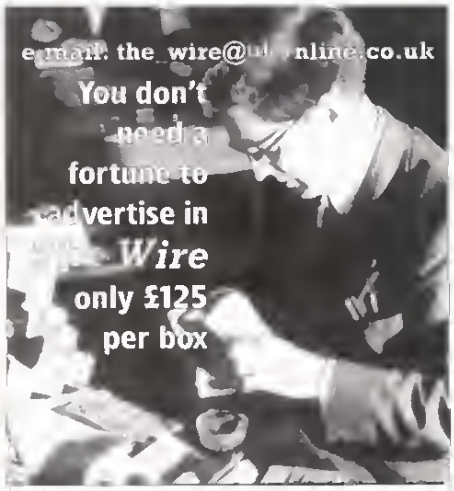

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david toop

The secret sounds of soul singers

Strange press trips have come my way, but none so revealing of the music business and its ways as the journey I took in 1988 to Minneapolis to interview a singer named Stephen Dante. I took the trip on condition that I would also talk to Monte Moir, St Paul, David Z and as many other ex-Time/Paisley Park spin-offs and Princelings as possible. This probably sounds crushingly normal, except for the fact that young Stephen lived in the same street as me in Crouch End. Frankie Fredericks could cover the distance between us in about eight seconds, bearing in mind the slight incline, cold weather and irregular pavement surface.

Stephen was, probably still is, a great singer, but he never cracked it. Perhaps the most startling feature of his first album was his choice of a cover version of David Sylvian's "Ghosts". A lukewarm soul ballad cover, though not deserving of the fear and loathing stirred up amongst Sylvian's over-precious fan club, yet Dante's take on Japan led me to speculate that UK soul, once it found a way to distance itself from the misguided expectations of its supporters and historians, could be a complex and bizarre beast reflecting the merging of disparate musical genres so typical of this country.

What happened next, of course, was House and Acid Jazz and Techno and Hardcore and Jungle and Swing and gangsta rap and black rock, black pop, black singer-songwriters and a whole host of hybrid forms, all raising questions of contemporary relevance for the soul ballad which Boyz II Men and Whitney Houston resolutely failed to address. So I was stirred and shaken to hear "Asleep When You Come" by Lewis Taylor. Lewis lives a ten minute drive away from me, so some sort of pattern seems to be establishing itself. Maybe we could meet in Ulan Bator. If we do I would want to discuss Marvin Gaye's *I Want You* album, one of the defining moments of 90s soul but recorded in 1976.

I had a conversation with Carl McIntosh of Loose Ends a couple of years back. He told me he had heard *I Want You* in its original form, complete, except for Marvin Gaye, lead vocals taken by its composer and producer, Leon Ware (uh-oh, outtake talk alert). Gaye was capable of his own dreamscapes, as the *Trouble Man* score demonstrates, but something perfect happened with *I Want You* and Leon Ware was the literally unsung architect. With *Taste The Love*, released last year, Ware returned to his (and Jackie Hilliard's) best known song from the collaboration with Gaye, "Come Live With Me Angel". It's a beautiful song and Ware sings with a similar sensitivity to Marvin, except in a fit of haven't-quite-caught-up-with-the 90s-yet he forgot the outstanding quality of his own past productions.

Which was, to layer percussion, vibraphone, Fender Rhodes, wah-wah guitar, woodwinds, brass, alto saxophone, strings and subliminal vocal harmonies, levelling them in the mix to a rippling translucent shimmer. Then add main voice, bass and drums as foreground. Results: romantic trance music. If soul music, as defined by Peter Guralnick, was the Southern dream of freedom, then the Leon Ware method represented re-identification, a drive towards inner space after that dream turned nasty.

Lewis Taylor

Another phase of re-identification is in progress now. Lewis Taylor knows you can't achieve the altered states of mid-70s Marvin, Bootsy or Isleys with the exaggerated presence, clarity and steep attack of 90s drums and digital keys. So he samples Joe Meek, overlays stumbling beats, blurs blues harp with a mash of indistinct chords, hugely amplified glottal tap drips and backwards guitar, all swirling in a Namibian dust storm. Then adds main voice (Marvin Gaye — *I Want You*-style, of course), bass and drums.

I like Taylor's music at its most experimental, less so when he falls into straight R&B, which Mary J Blige can do better. I like hearing it blind, pre-marketplace, pre-media, wanting to know more about him, wanting to know where he sits in this tradition he has chosen for himself, analysed, then reassembled in a home studio. Seeing, in the press release, that he had researched the history of black music for 18 months (18 of his months, not black music's) I phoned press, asked if he was black, white or green. "It doesn't matter," somebody said in the background. "It's a dodgy question." Well, age is not supposed to matter either, but if I read one more reference to Bob Zimmerframe.

Maybe my enthusiasm waned a touch, overhearing that response and sensing the possibility for another teeth-grinding Jamiroquai controversy on the horizon. What matters is not so much *who* people are but *why* they do what they do and *how* they do it. To find that out, dodgy questions may have to be asked. After all, questions of identity remain questions and they don't get any simpler. In Zurich a few weeks ago, a Swiss anthropologist told me we should all stick to our own heritage. Talk about caught in the crossfire. First record I ever bought was the *Rawhide* theme, and not too many cattle drives in the suburbs where I grew up. So much for heritage.

This morning a copy of Xebec's *Sound Arts* magazine arrived from Japan. Listening to the records I'm talking about above, I found myself reading in *Sound Arts* about the amplification of heated metal strips, desert ants crawling over microphones and similar esoteric explorations of micro soundworlds. In this present phase of music making, heated metal strips and soul ballad production seem part of an extraordinary continuum in which sound has regained its importance as a primary emotive force.

But shifting the consideration of music a few degrees away from its commercial and academic classifications doesn't disengage it from the ghosts of history. None of us, I am sure, even when flown long distances to meet neighbours, are particularly taken with the notion of decontextualised Easy Listening.

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